TENNIS TACTICS

by RAYMOND D. LITTLE

Jack Finch Esq.

TENNIS TACTICS

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RAYMOND D. LITTLE

Winner of Doubles Championship, 1911. Member Davis Cup Team, 1906

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RAYMOND D. LITTLE

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INTRODUCTION

THE present volume is devoted to a side of tennis which has not been written about to any great extent, namely: Generalship and strategy. Having learned how to hit the ball and mastered the preliminaries, one is more or less in the position of a person who knows how to make the various moves in chess but who does not know the openings, etc. And it is with the aim of filling this gap that this book is written. However, in order that it may meet the requirements of beginners, I have added the first chapter, dealing with strokes, body position, and swing, which I wrote a number of years ago and have changed only in part, as the principles then set forth still seem to me fundamentally correct. The remainder of the book has for the most part been published in OUTING and I am indebted to the editors of that magazine for assisting me in editing and arranging my material.

RAYMOND D. LITTLE.

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TENNIS TACTICS

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CHAPTER I

THE DIFFERENT STROKES

THE day will come in America when the tennis professional will be as much part of the equipment of a tennis club as the golf professional is now of the golf club. In a word, the proper way to learn how to play tennis is to start with a good teacher and devote oneself exclusively to form. There are certain principles that apply to hitting the ball, holding the racket, footwork, and body balance, and these are best learned from a teacher who will watch over the beginner and prevent him from starting on the wrong track.

But since only a few players have at their disposal either a good professional teacher or a good amateur teacher, they are more or less driven to books. I will not, however, dwell very long on the way of making the stroke, as that is a side of tennis which has not been neglected by previous writers. But little has been written about the problems that meet the player in actual competition.

Yet study of them would take many a man who is physically equipped for the game and understands the mechanics of it out of his stationary position as a second-rate player into the first rank. Before going into the study of actual competition it will be worth while running over certain points that should absorb the beginner's attention entirely until he is able to put them into practice.

In America there are few professional teachers in tennis, as in golf, who take care of the beginner and thus insure against a false start. The average person going out to play for the first time, thinks only of hitting the ball so that it will fall in the court on the opposite side of the net. He does not think how the swing is made and, consequently, seldom makes the stroke twice in the same form; thus, at the very beginning, he forms a habit that can never go with good tennis.

Of course no two persons can make precisely the same motions, any more than one can find two men who drive exactly alike in golf; but the same effect can be reached, even while retaining the natural motions, and the more machine-like the stroke becomes the greater will be its effectiveness.

The error into which one is most prone to

fall and one that, once learned, is very difficult to correct, is to hit the ball with a short, jerky movement, made entirely with the arm. This gives almost no speed to the strokes, and thereby prevents consistent accuracy; one cannot devote too much time to developing a long, free stroke.

It is just as much a science to hit a tennis ball with speed and accuracy to a desired point in an opponent's court as it is to complete a draw or massé shot in billiards. To complete successfully such strokes with any degree of regularity, the player should move into exactly the proper position, and to gain this correct position the matter of how to place the feet is of the utmost importance.

The weight is evenly divided on both feet, which should be almost on a line parallel to the net, with the balance thrown slightly forward. This position permits of a quick start in any direction, and the racket, held in both hands across the body, gives a steadiness as one moves to hit the ball.

Not only in waiting for a service is it proper to balance the racket in both hands, but it will be found a great aid to speed if the racket is always returned to that position after making any return.

Many players serve the first ball with all the power at their command in hope of sending it in the opposite court with such speed that it cannot be returned. When successful it appears very fine, and spectators speak of the wonderful service; but actually it seldom pays. The ball rarely goes into the desired space, and it requires such slackening of speed for the second ball, in order not to double fault, that the striker-out can obtain just the proper position desired to make a good stroke from the slow ball.

The principal thing to bear in mind in service is that the ball should be hit from a point as high as possible above the head. In regard to the speed, the first ball should be hit only as hard as is consistent with the certainty of placing a large percentage within the bounds of the receiving court. The ball should be "placed" at least enough to interfere with an aggressive return. Many, high-class players even, are kept constantly in trouble by being forced to a very slow and safe second service, because of too swift a first ball with its consequent irregularity.

We now come to the point of playing a ball that has struck the ground, the manner of hit-

ANTHONY F. WILDING

The Australian player who combines speed, headiness, courage, and knowledge of the game to a degree that makes him probably the greatest player in the world.

ting such balls being spoken of as a "ground stroke."

There are three main points to this play, *i.e.*, the correct position of one's feet; keeping the ball far enough from the body, and, last, whether to play the ball as it rises from the ground or as it drops from the highest point of the bound. In making a forehand drive the left foot is advanced, allowing the weight to be made use of in the swing; should the ball come to the backhand the other foot would be the one advanced—briefly, the player does not face the approaching ball squarely, but rather stands with one side of his body toward its approach.

As for the second of the three points, the stroke is made with almost a full extended arm. To strike with a bent arm from close to the body cramps the player, and tends toward "chopping," instead of a long swing. The eye seems naturally to draw one too close, and even the best players in early spring practice, before their eye regains its exactness after a winter's rest, have some trouble to keep far enough away from the ball. It is better by far to err by keeping too far away from the line of the approaching ball than to be too close, as in stepping back it is impossible to use one's

weight, while, moving forward, good use can be made of the body.

The correct part of the bound from which to play a ground stroke is an open question. It is safest and easiest to stroke as the ball drops from the top of the bound; that much is beyond dispute, and should be well learned before trying the other way. Nevertheless, many players, mostly experts, believe in taking more chances and move in closer to take the rising ball, in order to make the return quicker and to allow the opponent less time to recover position. As done by a player who is used to the game, it is a brilliant and profitable play, but, for the majority of players, it is much better to play the descending ball and be more certain of not throwing away the point, at least until the fundamentals of the stroke have been mastered.

Now comes the question of hitting the ball, the best way to do it, and how much speed to use: In the first place, the racket should be held in the most natural grip which will allow the full face to be toward the ball. For the back-hand, the American idea is to change the grip, so that the same side of the racket is used as in the fore-hand, and if the thumb is kept extended behind the handle it will be found

a great help in placing to the desired points. It has already been mentioned that a stroke should be made with the arm fully extended, but there are a number of points in playing different strokes which may come to the mind of one who has only watched others make them.

Probably the most important part of making the proper swing is to keep the racket as nearly parallel to the ground as possible; or, in other words, the head of the racket should not be allowed to drop much below the line of the player's wrist. On paper this may seem difficult, but in actual play it is quite simple to bend down for such a position. A person who plays with the racket straight up and down will never gain steadiness, nor be able to place the ball with any precision.

As to keeping a hard-hit ball from going outside the lines of the opposite court: To make a hard stroke on a ball which bounds rather low, to send it over the net and keep it within the lines requires a down twist to be imparted to the ball. This will cause it to curve downward from its line of flight and is accomplished by a movement of the wrist, bringing slightly forward the upper side of the racket at the instant of contact, causing the ball to be hit slightly on top, and giving it a down spin.

The harder the ball is hit, the sharper is the drop. The principle is the same as that of the drop curve in baseball. In making this play great care should be taken not to acquire the habit of jerking the wrist; a jerk sometimes increases the drop, but is apt to make a player erratic. The correct movement is a simple sweep with the turn of the wrist which can hardly be seen during the execution of the stroke. Against an opponent who comes up close to the net, to the volleying position, it is necessary, because a slow ball, well above the net, is easy to reach and kill completely.

The question of the amount of speed with which to play must surely come to the mind of every player, and is one that can have only one answer, which is that each must decide his own case. But this decision must be reached by each in the same way. The man who gives away the fewest points, by placing out of court or in the net, in a game of tennis is almost surely the winner; and when two men who are equally cautious meet, the winner is he who can play with the greatest speed combined with the greatest steadiness. The only way for this decision to be reached is by experiment. Try first to drive a slow ball, making sure of placing it within the opposite boundary lines, and then

gradually increase the speed, stopping only when it is no longer possible to play with certainty. How many men have I seen who liked to hit wildly about every third ball, using all the force at their command, with the result of seldom scoring; and the percentage of misses is not remembered when the unexpected happens and a point is made.

The most aggressive play in tennis is the volley, and usually it is the winning one. When a player moves up to the net, it is to get a chance to kill the ball, and there can be no such thing as safety play from the position; it is make or break.

The volleying strokes are made like the ground strokes, with a full arm, except that the ball often is sent directly at the player and must be met well in front of the body. The volley from about the level of the shoulders is the simplest stroke in the world to play and really requires little more than hitting the ball squarely. A play from below the level of the net, however, is a more difficult matter. To meet this ball successfully the racket must be held with a very rigid wrist, and with the lower edge of the racket advanced farther than the upper. This causes the ball to rise above the net and still not go very high above it, also

giving the ball a slight backward spin which deadens the bound.

Sometimes in volleying it is sufficient simply to hold the racket in the path of a hard-hit ball, the natural rebound being enough to carry it back over the net. But more often it is necessary really to hit with some force, and here is where many persons fail; they swing, as they would for a ground stroke where there is plenty of time to gage the line of flight. But at the net a sharply hit ball is coming, which has not bounded and must be met differently. The trick is to get the racket in position, so that if not moved it would be hit by the approaching ball, and then move the racket forward in the line of direction with a pushing motion.

Against a man at the net only two plays are possible; one is to drive the ball by him, and the other to send the ball high in the air, trying to have it drop within the lines and over his head; this latter play is called "lobbing."

The manner of volleying drives has just been discussed, and now we come to the way to meet lobs. Seeming to be very simple, it is actually the most difficult thing in the game to hit the descending lob with great speed, but that is what should be done. Among the best tennis players of the country smashing of lobs

is probably the most erratic feature of the game. The chief errors into which a player drops are, not swinging at the ball correctly, and not standing under it in the proper place. Very many players when a lob goes up raise the racket above the head and balance it there until the ball comes down to it. At the best, they cannot then do more than stop it. A player should make a full swing for a lob, starting from near the ground and, bringing the bat from behind the body, come down on the ball with all the power at command. Of course, unless the player is in just the proper place this smash is impossible, but if care is taken to be in such a position that the descending ball would hit fairly on the player's face, it can be done with regularity.

How to hit the ball with the correct swing can be suggested in a book, but these suggestions should be augmented by careful watching of expert players and by thoughtful practice—if possible, as has been said, under the guidance of a good teacher. It is much the wisest policy not to think of trying to defeat even your dearest friend until you are a master of stroke. When you really begin to play tennis, as opposed to practicing tennis, you should be perfectly prepared to take up the problems of

generalship, and of these the first is the development of the attack.

But before taking up the question of attack the first step in making the modern game of tennis clear will be to show how it has come out of the old back court game and the subsequent net game, why the net game superseded the back court game, and why the modern game has superseded both.

CHAPTER II

BASE-LINE AND NET PLAY

THEORETICALLY base-line play is sounder tennis than net play, but history and experience show that the persistent volleyer can defeat the persistent back-court player. It is easy to see that a man at the net leaves "winning openings," to take a phrase from court tennis. A perfectly aimed and executed shot will pass him almost invariably and, once passed, an ace is scored against him as certainly as a hit into the bleachers clears the bases. There is no shot played against a base-liner so sure to win a point for his opponent as a successful passing shot played against the net player; nor is there any defensive play more effective than the lob which floats over the head of a man in the forward court.

Moreover, constant rushing to the net is a fearful strain—a strain that is added to by the frequent necessity of suddenly darting out of one's course to prevent being passed. The

volleyer seldom has the time to prepare for his shot that a man has to prepare for a ground stroke. Time and time again he has but the minutest fraction of a second to determine where to send the ball. Altogether he is forced to think, strike, and move with the greatest rapidity.

If the base-line player of practice and the base-line player of theory were one and the same the position at the net would be untenable. The latter is infallible, the former human; and being human, he makes a perfect passing shot a great deal less than fifty per cent. of the time.

If we answer the questions, what becomes of the imperfect passing shot when played against a good volleyer, and what becomes of the short lob, we will begin to understand why the volleyer can defeat the base-liner. The short lob at best (that is, best for the man playing it) can be returned with pace and depth or with pace and angle without forcing the man at the net hopelessly out of his position. At worst it is "killed." The imperfect passing shot offers the same opportunities to the man at the net.

A professional baseball player who makes a hit every third time that he comes to bat has a high batting average, and I believe that a

tennis player who passed a man at the net every third time would have a high passing average. On the other two shots the volleyer can force his opponent to cover very much more court than he could if he, too, were playing from far back and allow him half as much time in which to cover the greater field. These are the reasons why the argument of the greater soundness of base-line play fails. But if these are not convincing, the history of the game is full of proof that the position at the net has a great offensive advantage over the position in the back court.

You sometimes read in the paper a letter by an old time ball player to the effect that the men in his day threw a ball as swiftly, fielded as neatly, and batted as hard as the men to-day. Similarly you sometimes hear from a tennis player of the eighties the implication that the Renshawes or Sears played as well as any man who ever held a tennis racket. These older players believe apparently that with one drink from the fountain of youth, and without a change of method, Sears could win as many matches from Beals Wright at his best as Wright could win from Sears.

It is the base-line argument over again and amounts to pitting theory against fact. No

doubt the great players of the eighties could hit the ball just as truly as those of the nineties or those of the present decade. They were just as good natural players, just as fleet-footed and accurate, just as athletic and intelligent, but the science of the game had not reached as high a point of development and they therefore did not have the advantage of seeing all the possibilities in tennis that we see to-day. The offensive use of the volley only began to be understood with the arrival of O. S. Campbell in 1890, and the perfect balance of back and front court play, which is the ideal of to-day, did not become our ideal until the international matches had refreshed our memory on the possibilities of the base-line position. As we showed the Englishmen the possibilities of the volley, so they recalled to us the fact that in strengthening our net game we had overlooked our ground strokes

To-day we see clearly that neither department of the game can be ignored. They must both be brought forward together and made to supplement each other. It is certain that the persistent volleyer can defeat the persistent base-liner, but it is even more certain that the player who controls both games can defeat the persistent volleyer. Let us glance once more

at the history of the game, because it brings out so clearly the strategic advantage of the net position over the back-court position and the advantage which the player who can play the back court and the net game offensively has over the player who can play only the net game offensively.

Originally tennis was practically all base-line play; rallies were liable to be long continued because hard hitting—before the days when "top" was understood—was to an extent limited. If you have ever watched the Woman's National Championship Tournament you must have been struck with the length of the rallies. This is accounted for by constant back-court play, in which long, deep strokes are sent back and forth until one of the opponents makes a miss or is gradually forced out of position. When a player like Miss Sutton arrives on the scene the situation changes, because her forehand stroke has enough severity to be played through an opponent without giving her time to reach it.

A parallel situation existed in the man's game when the Lawford stroke was introduced. This was the crude beginning of what we call "top." The Lawford stroke has practically dropped out of tennis to-day, but the modern stroke

uses its principle. It was an awkward stroke, not capable of being finely calculated, in which the ball was lifted by sweeping the racket upward across its surface, the ball at the same time being given a fast forward spin so that after rather a high flight across the net is dropped quite suddenly. Top must have been used unconsciously before this, but here was the beginning of a conscious effort to "put something on" the ball. With the development of this stroke it began to be much more possible for one base-line player to play past another.

Since O. S. Campbell we have not had a base-line champion—a fact which speaks volumes. He was the first man fully to grasp the advantages of the net position, which are, as I have said, that you can force your opponent to cover nearly twice as much territory in little more than half the time. Campbell not only saw this, but he made it clear to others, and as a result for a number of years four out of every five players were volleyers. (The crowd always follows the winners.) Our leading players began to sacrifice everything to "getting to" the net. After O. S. Campbell came R. D. Wrenn, and during this same period two men came out of the West who volleyed as well as any men we have ever produced, although they

did not become champions. These were Bond and Neel, both very severe at the net.

As I have said, American tennis began to be obsessed with the idea of the net game, the back court becoming more and more a defensive position. Since R. D. Wrenn we have had as champions Larned, Whitman, Wright, Ward, Clothier, and McLaughlin. Of these, Ward and Wright have developed the volleying game to its highest point, Wright at his best being the most effective volleyer, with the exception perhaps of Norman Brookes of Australia, that the game has ever produced. He combined power and speed with accuracy and, once in command of the net, it was very difficult to dislodge him or prevent him from forcing the point in his own favor.

Whitman and Larned, in his later development, stand out from the group of volleyers as men with balanced, all-around games. The result is that their records stand ahead of the records of Ward, Wright, and Clothier. Whitman was unbeaten champion for three years and Larned won the championship seven times. We may credit these exceptional records to a certain extent to preëminent natural ability, but I think part of it should be credited to the all-around game.

We have seen what is the advantage of having the net position. If one can contrive to hold it a great proportion of the time, it does not matter if he is not quite all that he should be when playing in the back court, or at least let us suppose that this is the reasoning of the volleyer. Fundamentally weak as this reasoning may be, it has nevertheless resulted in bringing out some important points which have now become fixed in the game. It has resulted in the American twist service as evolved by Ward—a service that has since been employed by many players but has reached its greatest effectiveness in the hands of McLaughlin; and it has brought out, too, the reverse twist service which Whitman alternated so tellingly with a direct service and which, strangely enough, has also been carried farthest by a Californian, Bundy.

Ward was a great net-player and he was most at home in that position. He wished to go to the net on his service, as most of the tennis players of his day did and as most of the players to-day wish to be able to do when they find it necessary. If he had served a straight, swift service, he would have been in the same position in running to the net that the ends on a football team are when they run down the field

M. E. McLOUGHLIN

Whose fast twist service and tremendous smashes overhead have made him one of the most sensational players in the world.

under a long, low, swift punt. He would not have reached the net in time to cover his opponent's return, and he would have taken just that much more risk of being passed.

If he had played an ordinary slow service in order to have time enough to reach the net, his opponent would have had a chance to return it with deadly deliberation. What he wanted was a service that would give him time to reach the net and still leave his adversary as badly off as if a swift service had been sent to him. Hence the American twist service. I do not know that Ward actually discovered this service, but at least he was the first man to mould it to his purpose—to make it cover his rush to the net.

The American twist service sends the ball forward with an exaggerated diagonal spin so that the ball after taking the course of an outdrop "breaks" at the bound. Instead of following the course of its flight, as an ordinary cut service does, it bounds to the other side and, owing to the speed of its spin, it bounds high. In the hands of McLaughlin or Ward it can be very accurately placed so that it forces the receiver well back and out of position. And, also owing to the spin given to it, the ball hangs in the air, allowing the server time to take the net.

The American twist service is not so important in itself—in fact, like the persistent volley, its weaknesses are now recognized—but it first showed us the full possibilities of the service. And historically it is very important, because it taught us how to get into the net under the service without being left at the mercy of a very strong return. But for the singles player rushing the net is no longer the religion that it was. It is enough to say that a man should have in his control a service which will allow him to take the net when he wishes to. Personally I believe the American twist service requires a waste of energy and that such a strong defense has been built up against it that it has greatly lost its former effectiveness. McLaughlin still uses it with great success, because he is unusually strong and can vary it with a fast, straight service which he delivers with almost the same movements as for his twist service, this keeping his antagonist in a state of uncertainty.

This sketch of the American service indicates the qualities which a service should have. It should be an offensive stroke, leaving the man who makes it an opportunity to follow it in or not, as he decides is best. And as with the service, so must it be with every other stroke

made from the back court. The position should be occupied as an offensive one, not merely for the purpose of defending oneself until he can run to the net. This was too often the case with the persistent volleyer. The all-around man will not only attempt to pass the man at the net or lob over his head, but he will attack him and try at every turn to batter down his guard. He must make an opening and, having made it, he must not hang back like the old base-line player, but must run in and himself become a volleyer.

In the old days one might have discussed back-court and net play separately; to-day they have to be taken up together, for they are inseparable. We have only to compare the past method of hitting a ground stroke with the present. It used to be the practice to hit the ball when it was falling. In this way one gained time in preparing one's shot and could hit with more careful precision. This was a perfectly logical way of driving before the habit of taking the net had come in, but it is no longer logical. The element of time has become very important in tennis.

Let us go back for a moment to the American twist service. If the receiver waits until the ball is falling and its spin has diminished he

will have to stand far back. The ball will be traveling for a longer time before it reaches him and after it rebounds from his racket it will take longer to travel back to the net. These periods of time will be utilized by the server in coming in and he can be comfortably settled at the net before he is forced to volley.

Suppose the receiver, knowing from experience how much the service is going to "break" —that is, change its course—and understanding the effect of the "twist" on his own shot, stands well in so that he can hit the ball at least before it begins to fall and drive it with a direction and speed that allows for the twist, the result is entirely different. Instead of giving the server plenty of time to reach the net, he has given him hardly enough time. He may have caught him on the run, and in any case he has not permitted him to hold the net without a struggle.

Brookes, for example, stands far in when receiving and hits the ball while it is rising. He thereby fairly doubles the difficulty of the server to capture the net and at the same time increases his own chances of capturing it. You may argue that Brookes is essentially a volleyer and that his one ambition in life is to reach the net. But consider the case of Larned. Al-

ways a great player, his overwhelming success coincided with his change to what might be called the modern driving position. That is, he came in closer to the ball. I do not mean, of course, that he moved toward its line of flight—which would be an entirely false move—but forward in the court so that he met the ball sooner. By this simple, time-saving device he added so much to the attacking power of his back-court game that it became almost invincible, combined with the fact that he was always prepared to take advantage of the slightest opening and go to the net.

The rising ball is not as safe to drive as the falling ball and it might be radical advice to say that a young player should adopt the practice of driving a ball while it is still going upward, but it can be said definitely that the top of the bound ought to mark the latest moment in which to drive. The drive should not only have the general object of winning the point, but it should also increase your own opportunity of reaching the net and decrease your adversary's. Every stroke from the back of the court is made then in relation to a volley shot at the net; but to make clear the difference between the essential volleyer and the all-around player it ought to be repeated that a player

should play his back-court game not only in relation to his net game but with its own distinctive offense.

Neither Wright, Ward, nor Clothier ever tried very hard to force the game from the base-line. We might leave out Clothier, because at the present time he devotes much of his practice to his ground strokes, having a full understanding of the modern game. Nor for that matter are there any fine points about tennis that Wright and Ward do not understand. But they developed a game which did not permt them to force the play from deep court. Either they had to draw their opponent out of position with a slow chop stroke or play over his head, in which case they promptly took the net themselves. Wright has a wonderful defensive shot in the form of a chop which he can play with remarkable accuracy, but it is not a shot that can be used offensively.

And this one stroke shows the change that has come into tennis during the period marked roughly by the championship of Campbell and the championship of Wright. A representative of the game in its present stage has an accurate passing shot and a good lob, but he also has a "punch." It is the forcing game played from the back court plus the forcing

game at the net that marks our present period in tennis. It is not enough to know how to drive with depth and angle or to know how to volley sharply. One must have both departments under control and be able to play one against the other, not letting your opponent know where your attack is coming from, interweaving both games perfectly.

We are attacking this problem from one end, the Englishmen from the other. Larned and Whitman both have solved the difficulties of this balanced game; the Dohertys solved it after their first visit to America. A number of our arrived players are working on this basis, and of the newcomers R. N. Williams has a splendid foundation to support the best type of modern play.

This story of the historical development of the game must make it clear, not only that the all-around game, which is considered in a later chapter, is the essentially modern game, but it has also made clear that the best players to-day are men equipped to plan and carry out an attack. It is the offensive game that counts—in other words, the attack.

CHAPTER III

THE ALL-AROUND GAME

IT has been shown that the base-line game as played by the pioneers of tennis was superceded by the net game and that this in turn is passing away before the intelligent combination of its virtues with those of its forerunner. How to develop this intelligent combination is one of the most important and interesting problems of practical tennis competition. And that it is also a difficult one is proved by the limited number of players who have been able to solve it.

When should we stay back? When should we go up? And how should we combine the forward and backward positions in such a way that our game may be given the most effective variation? Here are three questions which the modern player is setting himself to answer. Unlike the base-line player, he does not stay back until he is forced to go up in order to reach a ball, and unlike the net player, he does not rush in with almost mechanical repetition.

Nor does he stay up half of the time and back half of the time. Even the strongest reactionary from the period of excessive volleying which we have just finished would probably be forced to admit that the net position must be occupied at least three-quarters of the time when a player finds it possible to occupy it—must, that is, if we wish to play our strongest game. In other words, we shall win seventy-five points at the net for every twenty-five that we win from the base-line. If this were not so, the persistent volleyer would not, as he does, win from the persistent base-liner about seventy-five per cent. of the time. It is so, moreover, in spite of the many matches wherein the great majority of points are scored from the base-line.

But every principle of tennis strategy has to be adapted to immediate conditions. That accounts greatly for the fascinating quality of the game. Perhaps your opponent, celebrated as a volleyer and generally much weaker on his ground strokes, happens one day to be volleying badly and playing his ground strokes marvelously. Naturally that is not the day for you to be too obstinate about taking the net. On the contrary, force him into the net so that you may gain the advantage of his lapse in

volleying and discount his sudden ability to play a dangerous back-court game. Perhaps the match will be won without taking the net at all, but this will not alter the rule.

Suppose a court is heavy and it is impossible to run in fast enough to gain your position at the net. In that case you will be obliged to fall back on your ground strokes and make them compel openings which do allow you to go in. These are simple enough conditions—so easy to understand when explained that it may not seem worth while to mention them—but I have seen match after match that should have been won lost because a player failed to analyze the way his opponent was playing on a particular day, or the conditions of a special occasion. Points quite as simple as those cited have tipped the balance in many important matches.

The intelligent all-around game must take all these simple little points into consideration. The more we consider it the more we shall see that the present-day game is less mechanical than either of its predecessors and demands not only a better repertory of shots but greater mental elasticity. It permits a varied attack limited only by the generalship of the player. To examine in detail a few different kinds of

points is, I think, the best way to indicate the theory of the modern game.

In starting a match or a point, both men are back, the server just beyond the base-line and the receiver as far within the base-line as safety and efficiency permit. Perhaps he is obliged to remain outside the line. For the time being the game is between two back-court opponents. Let us see what are the possibilities of their play.

Imagine the receiver in his right hand court and the server sending him a hard, straight service wide to his forehand which the server follows in to the net. There are five things which the receiver may do. He may lob, cross court swiftly, or with a "fadeaway," or play down the side-line swiftly, or with a "fade-away."

If the receiver lobs over the server's head it gives him an opportunity to take the net. If he lobs within reach of the server but still well enough to make it dangerous for the server to "smash," he will take his back-court position. And just what that position is will be explained later. For the time being we know at least that he is unable to take the net.

If the receiver plays a swift cross-court shot or if he plays down the side-line swiftly

the object of his play is to pass the incoming opponent. Either shot is a win when perfectly played. The side-line shot is very tempting because it is, perhaps, a trifle easier of execution. But imagine for a moment that it is not successful. The main idea of the side-line shot is direction. One wants to play it so close to the side that the server is prevented from reaching it. It must be played swiftly, too, so that the server can have as little time as possible to dash out of his course from base-line to net to cover it. The result, nine times out of ten, will be a ball that sails pretty well over the net. Therefore if the server does cover it he has a splendid ball to volley and a great many times he can volley for an ace.

To make this clear will necessitate explaining the question of position which in turn rests on a sense of angle. Sense of angle is one of a tennis player's great necessities. There is an ever-moving angle whose head is the ball at the moment of impact with the racket, and whose sides are the extreme lines of flight which the ball may take and still remain within the boundaries of the court. The proper defensive position is the center of this angle—not the center of the court.

Let us go back to the point where the re-

ceiver has attempted to pass the server rushing in down the side-line and the server has covered the shot. What is the angle of this shot? It may be sent back straight down the side-line whence it came. That is one side of the angle. Or it may go sharply cross court so that in extreme cases its line of flight crosses the side-line at a point well within the service court. Here is the other side of the angle—the angle of the possibilities of that shot.

In order to cover this latter shot the striker would have to run in a line almost parallel with it, and as a ball having any sort of pace always flies faster than the player, he could not possibly make a return. The angle of this shot, therefore, is so great that it is almost impossible to cover it. In short, when the striker plays a cross-court passing shot he is almost in the center of the possible angle of return, whereas when he plays the side-line passing shot he is far off from the center of the possible angle of return.

When I say that a player has to have a sense of angle, it has two applications. One must realize the angle of one's opponent's shots in order to be able to get into position, which is on a line drawn through the center of this angle, and one must realize the angle of one's own

shots in order to see how good the position of the opponent is. It is sometimes deceptive to see an opponent standing off from the center-line of the court, and if you do not have a sense of angle you may be tempted to play wrong. The very court which appears to be least covered may be the one that is most protected.

We have seen then that the side-line shot has both the greatest possibilities for the receiver to win a point and to lose a point. The safer shot is the cross-court shot. That ought to be played sharp across the court with a deep drop. The side passing shot, so long as it has speed and direction, is about equally effective against an opponent taking the net, whether it lands just within the base-line or just beyond the service line.

The cross-court shot, on the other hand, must have its length carefully regulated. Its line of flight is sure to be within the boundaries of the net and base-line, but unless it is short and played with a deep drop it will sail over the side-line. It is a swift, short shot designed to pass in front of the runner before he can arrive near enough to the net to reach it. But in case he does reach it, he has at best a low volley, which he can either "shoot" back whence it came or else play down the side-line

nearest him. The striker's cross-court shot may be less liable to pass the server, but this is more than counteracted by the fact that the server can do much less damage in returning it.

Another point of difference between the side-line shot and the cross-court shot that is too often overlooked brings up the question of the height of the net. The cross-court shot passes over a net approximately three feet high, depending on whether it goes over the exact center of the net or a little to one side of the center where the net has begun to rise toward the post. The side-line shot passes over a net about three feet five inches high, the net being almost seven-sixths as high at the side-line as at the center—a difference equal to twice the diameter of the ball.

That is enough of a difference to catch a great many balls at the side which would have passed over the center of the net without touching it. It is enough to add a comparatively great element of safety to the cross-court shot. We see then that the side-line shot is more liable to be returned for an ace. The cross-court shot is safer, frequently results in an ace for the striker, and does not permit the server to make such a dangerous return.

These same shots when played as "fade-

aways " involve other points that affect the all-around game—the game of spontaneous judgment and varied play. Perhaps someone will ask what this shot with a baseball title is. It is an easy little shot specially invented to break up the dashing volleyer, and I do not know of any shot which is more calculated to make a vigorous attack on the net position look foolish. It will not only break up a man's rush to the net but many times it will allow the striker to follow it in to the net and gain the winning position. He takes the net in spite of the fact that his adversary is already there, and turns an apparently insecure position into a winning one because it is almost certain that only a slow " pop-shot " can be returned from his " fade-away." In doubles—the principles of which will be taken up in a later chapter—it is indispensable.

Suppose the striker, from the position we have been considering, instead of trying to send a sharp cross-court shot past his adversary, hits the ball extremely softly with a good cut and slides it with just enough force to carry the distance over the net so that it drops almost dead in the server's court. And suppose, too, that the shot is well directed with a keen sense of angle. Sometimes it will escape the server

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Seven times American Champion and pre-eminent master of the all-around game, his play is a continuous attack.

entirely, although more often the slowness of its pace gives the server time to reach it. But after he reaches it what can he do with it?

He cannot, as so often in returning a swift ball, simply put his racket in front of it and have it rebound swiftly into the striker's court. For the "fadeaway," when well executed, is practically without rebound. Thus, in returning it, one has to supply all the force for one's own shot. On account of its softness, too, the "fadeaway" has a low bound, so that it has to be lifted. The general result is that the inrushing server has frequently from a bad position to take a low ball close to the net and supply all the impetus himself. This latter point is important to consider because you can often make a low volley from a swift shot very successfully on account of the rebound. But to play a soft low ball from close to the net more than fifty per cent. of the time compels one to "pop" the ball over. That is why it is possible to run in behind a "fadeaway" and kill the return of it.

Perhaps the first time the "fadeaway" became noticeable for its success was when C. B. Neel, that great volleyer who for two or three years was the most feared player in America, met Hovey in the finals at Newport. For the

"fadeaway" had its share in preventing him from becoming national champion. Neel had mowed down one hard hitter after another, volleying the fastest ground strokes with consistent ease, but Hovey didn't send him drive after drive. He patted soft balls just over the net to his feet, so that Neel, instead of getting a good, snappy volley with plenty of rebound and force back of it, had almost to scoop the ball up off the turf and pop it back to Hovey the best way he could. The lesson taught by Hovey on that occasion has been remembered by American tennis players — particularly doubles players. But the "fadeaway" cannot be played from a swift or fast-breaking service because the rebound of such a service is too great and because to overcome the service and give your own shot its direction requires more speed than a "fadeaway" can afford to have.

The "fadeaway" not only has its own specific value, but it varies a man's game. Before taking up variety, however, and change of pace, two of the essentials of the modern game, we should look closely at another shot which shows how keenly an understanding of time and angle can be used. Think of the players in the position where we have seen them, the server run-

ning in to the net, the striker playing the ball wide from his forehand. Let the striker, instead of trying to drive down the side-line or execute a gentle "fadeaway," send down the side-line what is called in tennis patois a "floater."

A "floater" might best be described as a high, lingering passing shot, half way between a lob and a deep drive. Now if the man at the net is trying to cover a low passing shot he can jump to one side and extend himself almost horizontally without falling on his face to recover his opponent's attempt to pass him. But if the passing shot is a "floater" he can't put his body far off the perpendicular and still reach high enough. His defense is therefore narrowed by an appreciable distance.

As an illustration of what I mean, just try to touch a wall from the greatest possible distance away. You will find that as you move the point on the wall which you are trying to reach up the wall you will have to come nearer to the wall, and as you straighten your body and lift your arm your balancing powers diminish rapidly. Similarly to reach a side-line "floater" you have to bring your whole body much nearer to its line of flight. If you work this out with a diagram you will find out how

very nice a problem, in timing, angle can be. For, of course, if the "floater" is played so slowly that it gives the man at the net time to cross over and cover the increased territory its advantage becomes almost reversed.

The "floater" is essentially a half-court stroke because if played from far back it would give the opponent time enough to run across and "smash" it.

There is one more easy shot to which I would like to call attention just by way of indicating how closely a tennis player has to think. Often we have seen a player, when he and his competitor are both playing back, dash madly across the base-line to return a drive that he can hardly reach and try to drive with all his strength. Here come time and angle again. The player, being so far away from the ball that it is with difficulty that he reaches it, is out of position and unable to give any "follow through" to his shot, so that if he does send back a severe return, it's pure chance. And what if he does? He is far out of position; it is almost certain that he won't succeed in passing his opponent, and all he has done is to risk a shot that won't come off three times in ten, in order to present his adversary with a very valuable time advantage.

What a man wants above all things when he is far out of position is time to recover. If he delivers a swift ball and a swift return of it is made, the return can go almost anywhere in the court and pass him. Since he has the good fortune to see that his opponent is staying back, he can return a deep, slow ball with perfect safety, and besides the gain in safety he has time to recover his position.

This maneuver can be compared to the defensive use of the lob. We can hardly conceive of an all-around player who cannot lob well. But he does not always, by any means, lob in order to send the ball over his opponent's head. He quite as often lobs so that he can employ the time taken by the ball in sailing far up into the air for the purpose of recovering his position.

Sometimes, of course, he uses the lob as a strictly offensive shot, but this is another type of lob. When a man plays an offensive lob the very time that he has played to gain is also given to his opponent, so that it is rarely that the volleyer cannot recover a high lob even if it goes over his head and he has to let it bound. An offensive lob is most frequently played from the half-court position which used to be considered the untenable position. The idea is to lob

as low as possible and still get it over the other man's head so that he will not have time to run back and recover it on the bound. But it is at best a dangerous shot to play unless the volleyer is off his balance or somewhat out of position.

What I have attempted to show in treating these few situations which arise so much in competition is the kind of analysis the tennis player must make in order to equip himself for the all-around game. The foregoing has dealt chiefly with combatting the volleyer. The next chapter will take up the problems of the volleyer.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALL-AROUND GAME (CONT'D)

THERE are two general methods of winning the volleying position—by a forcing service or by a forcing shot which is not a service. These methods differ in appearance but not in principle. Of the various types of what I have called forcing services, the most distinctive is, of course, the twist service. And if we begin to analyze this we shall find out exactly what is implied by the word *forcing* when it is used to qualify a tennis shot.

The twist service was invented for the purpose of giving the server time enough to run into the net before the striker could make his return, and also to surprise the striker by an unexpected bound, so that, if he did make a return, at least it would not be too severe. In theory it is the very essence of a forcing shot. When first introduced, the famous "break" bothered players so much that some of them could not even touch the ball with their rackets. When they did play it their returns were un-

prepared jabs which were extremely ineffective, so that a man like Ward frequently either made an ace with his twist service or found himself "camped" at the net perfectly ready to volley an ace from the striker's weak return.

But the twist service has become so thoroughly understood by most good players that, except as a variant, it has lost its unusual effectiveness. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Bundy is the only player to-day who can use the twist service continuously with great effect. His service has the reverse twist and not only breaks but bounds very rapidly. McLoughlin, on the other hand, uses the twist service ideally from the point of view of the modern player, because he varies it with a fast ball and covers up his stroke so well that not until the last instant is it possible to see whether he is going to play a twist or a fast ball.

It has been suggested that for the player who has become familiar with it, the twist service is not difficult to return with speed. It might almost be put down as a rule that in the great majority of cases the striker must play it sharply in order to counteract the twist and supply direction. The slow flight of the twist service is ideal for giving the server time to reach the net before the striker has an opportunity to play.

But with the break properly discounted the striker will often find himself in perfect position to play an easy, high bound which he can drive down hard at an unusual angle. Moreover, understanding the break as we do now, we can go in much farther to receive the twist service. This partly discounts the time advantage of the service and increases the possible angle of the return. Let me repeat that the farther in a striker comes the more he will weaken the forcing quality of a service; for the essence of a forcing stroke is to gain a time advantage.

Before going further into the question of what is the best kind of forcing service, let me make it perfectly clear what I mean by the term *forcing*. A great many even good players do not define sharply the difference between a forcing shot and an ace, and lack of a clear distinction between the objects of these two shots leads to many a "foozle." There are two kinds of aces, the intentional and the unintentional. A forcing shot should never be the former, though the more often it is the latter the better.

A forcing shot is one which enables the player to take the net and play his opponent's return. Therefore, unlike an ace, it involves the idea of being returned, and unlike the defensive shot, it is not played to save oneself but

to gain an actual advantage in position—to advance definitely toward winning the point.

With these differences clear we can ask what kind of service most successfully allows the server to take the net. Clearly it must not be too swift. For in order to deliver a fast service the stroke must be completed with full power, so that the server finds it difficult to recover his balance before starting forward. This causes an appreciable delay. In other words, the faster the service the slower the start to the net, although there is less time to reach the net. The server, delayed in his start, will be met by the return before he is half way up. He will be caught under the handicap probably of being forced to play defensively from his feet instead of volleying offensively as he had planned to do.

This statement takes for granted that the striker has made a good return. But what if he has not? It is right here that we touch the crux of the server's problem. Since it has become so difficult to send a slow service such as the twist without finding that one has gained the net only to be left open to a possibly unvolleyable shot, it has fallen to the server to play in such a way that the striker cannot make a strong return.

No serve has been discovered which will aid the server to take the net as the twist service did in its first youth. It might as well be admitted that in attempting to take the net the server is in a position toward the striker similar to that of a good pitcher toward a good batter. The pitcher must outguess the batter and he has the advantage of having first guess. In exactly the same way the server must outguess the striker. He cannot mechanically help himself to enough time to reach the net and also compel the striker to play into his hands.

It is possible to serve with such speed and angle that the striker will not be able to reach the ball, but to attempt such a service too often may rapidly increase one's list of double faults. In one of the most important matches last year an attempt to serve too severely resulted in something like twenty-three double faults. This is one point less than enough to win a set —an extreme lesson in serving too speedily. And besides, this type of service is not a forcing service. It is an impossible service to follow in because it is too fast, and it therefore does not come into the problems of the volleyer except indirectly. The fast service, sent for the purpose of making an ace, is splendid for occasional use because it permits the server

to stay back and varies his pace. By altering the speed of the service and by not attempting to take the net with regularity, the server makes it much easier for himself to win the net when he really wants to, because he leaves the striker in a constant state of doubt as to the speed of the service and the position of the server.

The first thing then for the would-be volleyer to learn is how to go in as unexpectedly as possible, and the second thing is to go in quickly. The more quickly a man can go in the less slowly is he compelled to serve in order to be in on time. Some players wait until they see whether their serve is good and then make a wild dash forward. Don't wait to find out anything about your service, but fly the second the ball is hit. Then if there is any time to spare you have it at the right place, namely at the end of the sprint to the net, where a little extra time is a most valuable assistance. If the service is bad, walk back and serve again, not, however, feeling that you have wasted energy and that next time you are going to wait and see what happens before you run your heart out. The net position is only to be won by the man who is able and willing to be exceedingly energetic. It is not so difficult to be up and in for two sets, but in a hard five-set

match there comes a time when a player has to show real courage.

A player can soon find out how fast a service he can logically follow to the net. I have tried to make it clear that no player can safely go forward behind his fastest ball, and that it is also useless to run in behind a serve so easy that the striker can return it like a bullet. The constant aim of the server trying to win the net must be to keep the striker in a state of uncertainty, and to this end, besides changing the pace of his service, he must learn to place his service with the greatest finesse.

Like pace, placing should constantly vary. If I seem to repeat the word *vary* often, at least it is done purposely. It is a word for the tennis player to have ever in his mind. Just as the more uncertain the striker is of the pace at which the service is coming to him the more often will he mistime his stroke, so the more uncertain he is of where the service is going the less time will he have to prepare himself for his shot. We all know what happens to a badly timed, unprepared stroke, especially if the volleyer be well up and volleying surely. Bad timing does everything to the ball except what the striker intended and nearly always helps the volleyer.

Needless to say the placing of the service will depend on the position taken by the striker. If he plays to protect his back hand—incidentally a very bad thing to do—there will be a chance to play so wide to his forehand that he will have only just enough time to reach the ball and the server running in will meet an easy shot to volley. Every good server knows how to use the corners and ought to be able to cover up the goal of his shot until the ball is in flight. Playing the corners offers an elementary lesson in outguessing the striker. But like every other obvious opening the corners have the weakness of their strength, for, from the very beginning of his career, every player has had practice in defending himself against the shot sent to the place where he isn't. Nearly every player has learned then to drive a ball when running toward it. Moreover, it is naturally easier to strike a ball when moving toward it than when moving away from it.

This is why I think that in my own case serving into the corners of my opponent's service court has not proved as consistently effective, when trying to win an opening at the net, as serving toward the center of the service court in such a way that the striker has to move away from the ball in order to play his stroke freely.

For some reason the majority of players are more apt to be caught loafing when they are moving away from a ball than when moving toward it. If you serve directly at a player he sees instantly that he must move away, and if he is keen he will step well away from the ball and then come into it. To aim a fast ball directly at the striker is often as conclusive as playing a fast one to the corners. In one case he has not time to reach the ball and in the other to get out of the way of it.

But the forcing service is played with the best effect when it is placed just far enough away from the striker to tempt him to think that he is in position to play it and at the same time just near enough to him to be inside of his normal free swing. Nine times out of ten the striker will not move back the necessary six or twelve inches to make his distance away from the ball the right one, and his stroke will be enough cramped to put it off a little. In other words, the object of the forcing shot has been achieved—to win the net and to be attacked there not by a first-rate but by a second-rate shot.

If you happen to use a service that curves inward toward the body of a right-hand player when you serve to his forehand, try the experi-

ment of aiming your shot at the spot where the striker would most like to have it land. You will see how often he will fail to step back to allow for the curve of the ball in flight and for the resultant angle of the ball's bound, and how often, on account of this failure to step back, you will meet when you reach the net an imperfect instead of a perfect shot. To the uninitiated it may seem exaggerated to talk about controlling a service until you can place it within a zone six to twelve inches wide, yet an ability to do this is the secret of a good forcing service.

In a tennis match it is not alone the server who wishes to capture the net behind his service. Both players wish to win the right to volley after the service has been delivered and received quite as often as when they are actually serving. They do so by means of a forcing shot which, like the forcing service, is played slowly enough to allow the player to reach the net and strongly enough to leave the net position tenable when won.

The danger of not distinguishing between a forcing shot and an ace deserves a little fuller explanation. Never try for an ace when you are playing a forcing shot. Why? Anyone who has had tennis experience knows that by

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A young American with an almost ideal form and a splendid foundation for the all-around game.

far the greater proportion of his bad shots were originally spoiled mentally before they were ever physically misplayed. When the racket meets the ball there should be behind it a definite intention. This intention may be formed only a thousandth of a second before the stroke is made, but it must be there or the stroke, at best, will be weak. The intention to take the net—always the intention back of a forcing shot—involves the expectation of a return by your opponent. If you are playing for an ace you are playing to win the point then and there. To try to play an ace and to try to take the net behind it is illogical and bad logic is particularly ineffective in tennis.

For purposes of argument an intentional ace generally results from a fast, well-aimed shot. You have seen an opening in your opponent's court and you have aimed at it with all your skill. To bring off your play successfully means putting your mind on that shot and not on the next one. It ought to be executed with determination. How can you decide to try for a point and at the same time be thinking of running in to the net, without weakening your decision? It is like planning to move in two different directions at the same time.

My distinction between a forcing and an ace

shot does not mean that the former may not often turn out to be the latter. Nor does it mean that a forcing shot should be played in such a way that an adversary will surely be able to return it. Every shot is of course played with at least a hope that it will be the final shot. There is no law against making a forcing shot as difficult as possible for the other man to play—except the law of nature.

If you are going to use a stroke to cover your attack on the net position, this stroke must fulfill certain conditions which are not compatible with the ideal conditions of an ace. Suppose you and your opponent are both back and you wish to take the net. Your opponent has sent a hard drive to your forehand and as you return his drive you are standing just within the back-line. It is my contention that you should try either for an ace or a forcing shot, but not for both. If you do try for both it will mean that you attempt to drive a deep ball so fast and at such an angle that your adversary cannot reach it. The drive would be deep because no one would go in on a shot that also brought his opponent in, and it should be fast because in the circumstances that would be the only way to make an ace.

In order to execute a rattling fast drive the

distance must be good, the carry through must be perfect, and the stroke must not be hurried. Therefore a slow start to the net will follow the sending away of a fast ball, and if there is a return the chances are you will not be in time to meet it. If, on the other hand, you make a quick start to the net, as you should after a forcing shot, the chances are that you will hurry your fast drive enough to spoil it.

Depth and not too much pace are the necessary qualities of a forcing shot. The lack of pace, we now see, is to allow time to reach the net, and the depth of the shot is to give the volleyer time to defend the net. In order to hold the net position one must have time to run acros the court and reach his adversary's shot, and this time must at least equal that taken by the ball to travel from the other player's racket to the net. Besides depth the forcing shot must, like its corresponding service, be placed thoughtfully. Here again it may be tempting to place it as far away as possible from the adversary, and here again we have a temptation to which it is not always best to yield.

If the forcing shot is played to the corners it will probably make the other man run more to recover it, but will it help you when you

come to play the volley for which you have so carefully arranged? This brings us again to the important question of angle. If your forcing shot has gone to the far corner of the court, what is the angle of the shot that you have to cover at the net—especially when compared to the angle of the shot you have to cover at the net if your forcing shot has sailed down the center? In the first case your opponent's return may be sent down the side line nearest him or it may be sent cross court at the greatest possible angle over a three-foot net: that is, it travels over the middle of the net (the three-foot point) at the sharpest angle possible for a shot sent from far back. From your forcing shot down the center there can be no straight shot, and the possible cross-court shots are not only less in angle but have a higher net to traverse. As a volleyer then you have less territory to defend.

My reason for dwelling so long on the forcing shots is that experience has shown me that it is in winning the volleying position that most of our volleyers are weakest. We have a large number of players who actually play their volleys with remarkable skill, but they do not use enough judgment in taking the net. So many players seem not to grasp the fact that the

main part of the success of a volleyer depends on the manner in which he runs in—depends, in fact, on how he understands the playing of forcing shots.

Once having captured the net, where shall the player stand? First, in the center of the angle of his opponent's shot; and secondly, as close to the net as safety will permit. It is not a good thing to develop a habit of standing a certain distance from the net. The volleyer's position should vary with every opponent he meets. Some men permit you to stand in closer than others, and in any case one should always be close enough to the net to be able to command it. If you stand so far back that you are constantly forced to volley low, you are missing fifty per cent of the advantage of being at the net. The object of the volleyer is to increase his chances to kill and smash. In order to do this he must stand in so that he can hit as many shots as possible at a point higher than the net, and cut them down sharply and severely and at acute angles.

The volleyer has his choice of going sideways to meet the ball or forward to meet it. I think one should always do the latter when it is possible. Imagine the volleyer in the center of the court twelve feet from the net about

to meet a cross-court shot on his forehand. He can either jump to his right on a line parallel to the net, or he can jump to the right on a line toward the net. It is a question of time versus distance. When you jump in you have less distance to travel and less time to make it in. Your return also goes back to your opponent more quickly, giving him less time to meet it and, being nearer to the net, you have increased the possible angle of your return.

Every volley shot is not necessarily sharp. There is, for instance, what is known as the stop shot—a shot that belongs to what is sometimes called the up-and-down game. If your adversary is far back and you can place a ball so close to the net that he has not time to reach it, you can win a point quite as successfully as by passing him. If you can meet the ball high it is much better to kill it than to try to stop it. If you stop a high shot—a trick that some players indulge in—the ball falling from a good height naturally bounds well and more often than not the man in the back court has time to run in and dribble it by you or toss it over your head. On the other hand, the stop shot is a beautiful shot to play when you are compelled to volley a low ball. It is played gently with only enough force to climb over the net, and, dropping from a height little more

than the height of the net, the bound is low. In stopping the ball and lifting it over the net it receives a back-spin that still further lowers its bound.

Some players stroke their volleys, but until a volleyer understands playing with his wrist he is not properly equipped for the net position. Generally speaking, it is not correct to stroke the volley, and incidentally it is not generally possible to do so. There is not time. Meeting a fast drive squarely will send it back with sufficient pace, and if you add a snap of the wrist the result will be a pretty severe shot. There comes up in most volleying the question of pace versus placing. Placing will undoubtedly tend to diminish pace because it generally requires greater accuracy and allows less leeway.

I think this point is best illustrated when it is considered in regard to "smashing." One of the best smashers that ever played tennis was George Sheldon, and his theory was to smash at the center of his enemy's court. He calculated by doing this that he gained a very large leeway in direction and length—so large in fact that he was justified in putting all his force into the "smash." The result was that he made an unusually large average of aces. If a man is physically strong and can hit the

ball terrifically, this sounds like an excellent theory. On the other hand, I think there is a trust-to-luck element in all such playing. I believe it has a good influence on the other departments of a player's game to aim his smashes at a definite target. If you learn to smash with finesse—without going to extreme —you are developing the habit of using your eyes and mind constantly and it is so easy to lapse in fixing this habit that it does not seem to be a good thing to play any kind of a shot that allows you to lapse even for one stroke.

Smashing is not difficult in itself, but it requires constant practice and from practice ought to come the instinct to get into position for your smash instead of trying to take it when you are half set. When a player gets under a lob and has his head up, his eyes on the ball and his racket down, if the ball is falling so that it would hit him between the eyes he is in good position to handle the shot.

The volleyer then must know how and where to play his forcing shots; he must never loaf coming in and he must have a sense of angle and be on his toes every second. If he does these things and has any aptitude with a racket he will learn with a proper amount of practice to be a good volleyer.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTACK

ONE of the most evident rules of generalship in tennis is: to attack the enemy's weakest position. Stated thus badly, however, it is somewhat of a delusion. A great many players who have followed it blindly have been eliminated from tournaments, much to their surprise, one or two rounds before they expected to be.

A few years ago the doubles team which challenged for the national championship at Newport had as one of its members a player whose ability overhead was remarkable. In fact, it is doubtful if we have ever developed anyone more consistently dangerous in handling lobs. The result was that almost every team met by the challengers in their advance to that position made a point of not lobbing to him. Since he was dangerous overhead it appeared to be only logical, whenever possible, not to give him an opportunity to "smash."

Imagine the surprise of the challengers and

everyone else when the champions began from the first point of the challenge match to play high balls—not to the challenger who was supposed to be weaker overhead, but to the one who was considered the strongest man in the country at that game. Unfortunately for the challengers, he happened that day not to be right on edge in handling lobs. He was found to be after all vulnerable. The title did not change hands.

Accepting the fact that " the best team won," it is interesting to analyze the reasons for the champions making their attack as they did. They knew, to begin with, that the challengers had won the right to challenge, although every team met by them had been keen enough not to play their strength overhead. They knew that a certain maneuver had been tried by other teams and found wanting and they said to themselves: Why not try exactly the opposite maneuver? Others had played the challenger's weakness and had been beaten. They would play their strength and at least see what would happen.

If the challenger in question proved to be his usual invulnerable self overhead, the defenders could still change their attack without weakening their own confidence or increasing their

adversaries'. If, on the other hand, they should penetrate his strength it was tantamount to upsetting the entire scheme of play to which the challengers had become accustomed.

The champions showed by this simple process that they understood the true way to attack weakness—namely through strength. A man is accustomed to find his weakness weak, but if he finds his strength weak, that is an entirely different matter. His confidence receives an unpleasant shock and with that shaken his weakness becomes a weakness indeed.

The champions understood, too, that their attack would take the challengers by surpirse and it did. Moreover, the strong man of the challenging team in handling lobs had insidiously become a little bit more and more out of practice because the men who had played against him, throughout the season, had so rarely attacked him overhead, while his partner had received constant practice overhead and had been steadily growing stronger there. When champions discovered that they had chosen the right line of attack, they did not spoil their work by giving the challengers a chance to recover their balance.

As in doubles so in singles, the strategy of attacking a man's strength may be overdone.

By a too consistent attack you can put him in practice again. The thing to do is to vary your attack, and once having shaken your opponent's game, make every effort not to allow him to recover his balance.

Another reason why the obvious rule to attack a weakness should not be carried out too directly is that every player—at least every experienced, trained player— who has a pronounced weakness learns to cover it up to an extent. I remember, the first time I saw Gore (several times champion of England) play, wondering why his forehand shot was even better when he was moving away from the ball than when he was moving toward it. With most people this is naturally not the case. If they are obliged to back away from the ball their shot weakens greatly. But Gore was severer than ever.

It did not take long to find out the reason. His backhand is not proportinately strong and the result is that for years it has been constantly attacked. Gore has helped out his backhand by moving far over into his backhand court and taking many balls on his forehand. These shots he has had to take backing away from the ball. They must have been in the first place almost purely defensive shots, but they have

grown up and become strong until they are now literally his offensive shots.

Certainly the proper way to defeat a player like Gore is not to play to his weakness because he is so accustomed to it and has developed his whole game with an eye to protecting it. But the very act of attacking his strong forehand you weaken it because you oblige him to run toward the ball, and you draw him out of his backhand court so that at last you really can put the ball to his backhand instead of putting it where he can drive it terrifically.

I remember seeing Miss Sutton win a match chiefly because her opponent did not understand playing against a weakness through strength. She began immediately to attack Miss Sutton's backhand—her weakness. It was quite easy to see at the start that she had decided that the only way to break up Miss Sutton's deadly drive was to give her as few chances as possible of using it.

Miss Sutton is a strong forehand player with a comparatively weak backhand. On this occasion, at Niagara-on-the-Lake, she met in the finals a lady whom even she had to consider seriously. This lady, as I have said, immediately made an attack on Miss Sutton's backhand. Miss Sutton met this attack just as Gore

would have, or in fact any player whose backhand and forehand play were not evenly balanced. Gradually she moved into her backhand court until she had four-fifths of the court on her forehand.

Always she was ready for that shot which was played over and over again into her bachand court. Nine times out of ten she was able to run round it and take it on her forehand, returning the shot with one of her severe sweeping drives. Still her opponent continued to try to force her into her backhand. Miss Sutton edged back still further until her opponent was playing into a fraction of the court because she insisted in trying to play the ball back of Miss Sutton. Naturally a great many of her balls went "just out." By a persistent attack on Miss Sutton's weakness she missed the oportunity time and time again to drive into a forehand court that was wide open. And she also missed the opportunity—by not drawing Miss Sutton over into her forehand court of even finding her backhand court open.

I don't know, but I venture to say that Miss Sutton is accustomed to having her backhand attacked. And if some one should courageously attack her forehand she would be, while not necessarily broken up, at least drawn out

of her backhand court so that an opponent might be able to move against her backhand effectively. Her secondary defense—the defense of running round the ball—would be broken up.

In other words, the mind of the tennis player can never become fixed. He must be ready to change his attack the instant it has proved ineffective. Even as he runs after the hardest ball his brains must be as active as his feet. The higher you go in tennis the more brains count. One must be adaptable to the emergency of the instant. Nothing illustrates this better than the fact that such a simple obvious strategy as playing to a man's weakness is only a half-truth. Tennis is a game in which mental adaptability is always peculiarly in demand.

It is very rare that an attack arranged beforehand can be carried through successfully. When Beals Wright defeated Brookes on his first trip to Australia he planned a campaign the success of which is now a matter of tennis history.

Wright was in magnificent form and had his game under the most perfect control. Brookes was not as strong as Wright and the weather, which was distinctly tropical, tested the strength of both players cruelly. Wright's plan of at-

tack involved the "killing off" of Brookes. This he proceeded to do by playing, as he put it, first a short one and then a long one.

In other words, instead of playing across the court he played up and down the court. Whenever Brookes was back Wright forced him forward by a short shot that dropped just over the net. Brookes, after running in at full speed, was immediately driven back by a beautifully played lob and no sooner was he again in the back court than Wright drew him flying up to the net by another skillful soft shot.

Brookes ran away with Wright for two sets. But Wright did not change his original campaign. He was waiting for the time when Brookes would be too weak to beat him. He was bringing about that time. Brooke's successes in those first two sets would have shaken almost any player but Wright from his original purpose. Wright stuck like a bull-dog, letting Brookes win the first two sets but making it physically such a hard task for him that before the third set was over the value of Wright's strategy was proved. I doubt if one member of the great Australian gallery dreamed that their favorite Brookes was going down to defeat; but I believe that from the beginning

Wright had a feeling that he was going to "break the heart" of the great Brookes sooner or later. Otherwise it seems incredible that he could have sacrificed chances to win points for the sake of making his tall adversary stretch his legs a few more times in races back and forth down the court.

The match went five sets and at the end of both men were wobbling, but Wright had sufficiently more strength than Brookes to win because he had forced Brookes to take so many trips up and down the court. He won by a preconceived attack obstinately carried out to the bitter end. The coolness, strength and persistency necessary for such a victory are possessed by only one play in a generation, if as often as that.

Generally speaking, I do not believe in the arranged campaign. Of course, one has some ideas before beginning a match, but the great thing is to vary your attack, keep it constantly surprising, so that your opponent cannot outguess you. If he has any idea of what you are liable to do, he gains thereby that much more time to get into position and prepare his defense.

For instance year before last at Longwood in that thrilling match between McLoughlin and

Touchard it was a change in attack at the critical moment in the fifth set that decided the contest. When the score was three-four in the fifth set in favor of Touchard, McLoughlin was serving. Touchard, with great regularity, drove McLoughlin's service down the side line until McLoughlin began to anticipate the shot. Still Touchard held to his plan, putting more and more speed in his drive until at the critical point when McLoughlin begun frankly to anticipate the shot and rush in to meet it, Touchard calmly played a cross court shot, and McLoughlin, hopelessly out of position, was unable to recover in time, although Touchard's shot was almost a "flub."

Here is a capital example of mental adaptability. Ordinarly a hard drive down the line is better than a cross-court " flub," but if you are watching your opponent and you see that he is over-anticipating, even a " flub " may take him so entirely by surprise that its unexpected direction more than makes up for its deficiency in execution.

While it is perfectly true that by allowing your opponent to over-anticipate you are presenting him with a handicap, you ought, as soon as you discover the fact, to be able to take advantage of it. Draw him into over-anticipation

once or twice more, just as Touchard did, and then play the unexpected shot that you have been preparing for all the time.

Sometimes, too, by the appearance of too hasty anticipation a man can tempt his opponent to do exactly what he wishes him to do. I have seen men play down a man's alley because he had made several attempts to "poach" in his partner's territory. They would have been justified in playing his alley if his "poaching" efforts had been genuine. But he was only pretending to "poach." In reality he was trying to draw a ball down his alley pretending to have left it uncovered and when it came he was ready with a kill.

Such a maneuver—trick if you like to call it that—can only be played once or twice in a match. Therefore it can only win one or two points, but in winning those points you have shown your opponents that instead of being anticipated by them they are being anticipated by you. And when a player feels that he is being anticipated he is at a great disadvantage. It is like finding your adversary in an argument more quick-witted than you are. It demoralizes you—makes you angry perhaps—and prevents your doing yourself justice. Similarly in tennis, to be caught asleep out of position

means more than the one point involved. It starts demoralization.

In doubles this is especially true. After a team has been anticipated a few times its members begin to run into each other in their anxiety not to miss anything. They begin to feel that they have not had enough practice in team-work—that their opponents have some mysterious code of team rules that apply to every emergency. And if only you can keep them in this state of mind you are going to defeat them.

In mentioning what might be called the "fake opening" I refer to it only as an incident in creating the proper state of mind, from your point of view, in your adversary—I believe the proper way to create this state of mind is by consistent anticipation. There are two kinds of anticipation. One might be called defensive and the other offensive. For the former—to make it really effective—you must not only watch every movement of your opponent, especially his racket, while you are actually at play with him, but whenever possible you should have watched his movements in his matches before he meets you.

Suppose, for instance, a man has the habit of driving to an adversary's forehand court

and changing to a "chop" when he wishes to play to an adversary's backhand. If you have watched him play in previous matches and used ordinarly intelligent observation you will know into what part of your court he is going to send the ball long before he strikes it. His distance, the swing, the angle of his racket will all be different for a "chop" than for a drive; moreover, in a hundred little ways, his whole attitude toward the ball will be different and these little tricks of movement will put you on your guard long before you have seen his intentions by the face of his racket.

This is rather a self-evident case, but it shows what I mean by the proper preparation for defensive anticipation. Such a preparation gives a man a head start that is of inestimable advantage. Incidentally, no player should allow himself to be anticipated to such an extent, no matter how much his methods have been studied by his adversary. In the first place, if he is going to drive and chop he should learn to play both shots to right and left so that at least their direction could not be anticipated. And like a good pitcher his movements should be covered up as much as possible until the ball has been sent away.

Stonewall Jackson said that the best de-

fense was to attack. This may or may not be good military tactics, but it certainly is good tennis tactics. And this brings us to another side of the question of attacking weakness through strength and to the question of offensive anticipation. Defensive anticipation is anticipating what your opponent is going to do; offensive anticipation is preventing your opponent from "catching on" to what you are going to do.

The advantage of not allowing your opponent to guess your moves was well illustrated in one of Fred Anderson's matches for the Metropolitan championship. He was leading five-three in the deciding set and the score was thirty-forty in his favor, his opponent serving. The first serve was a fault. The server had one serve and the point was match-point. Anderson moved well over toward the side-line so that it was practically impossible to serve to his backhand. His opponent sent his second service over just as hard as he possibly could and Anderson didn't touch it. It was the one shot that turned the match.

It looked superficially like a lucky slam driven in desperation as a last chance, but as a matter of fact it was the better choice of two possibilities. Anderson's opponent could either

make sure of having his second service good, in which case he would surely place himself at the mercy of Anderson's very powerful forehand drive, or he could risk a double fault with the possibility of taking Anderson by surprise and, if not serving him an ace, at least destroying his advantage by making even his forehand return difficult.

Having decided on this choice, it only meant nerve to carry it through. And when a player has the nerve to play a critical shot deliberately and coolly there is every chance of its coming off. The reason more unexpected shots are not successful is that there is ever so slight a doubt in the man playing them. Behr, for instance, can play a very fast second service because he doesn't falter. He makes up his mind to play it and he plays it without any hesitancy. That is the secret of its success.

But to return to that second service which played such an important part in the Anderson match, Anderson naturally decided that the second service in the match-point wouldn't be a "smash." Therefore he could leave his forehand pretty well open since at the critical point his opponent wouldn't dare to serve a fast one. But his opponent knew that if Anderson played a forehand shot off an eased-up

service the point probably would be over the minute he hit the ball, for Anderson, always severe on his forehand, is particularly deadly in playing a ball that does not come to him fast. His opponent couldn't serve to Anderson's backhand; there wasn't room. The only way to win the shot was to hit the ball with unexpected severity—to create a surprise in other words, so that a shot which looked on its face a little wild is shown by analysis to have been practically compulsory.

The reason that Larned is such a great player is that his game is a continuous attack. The high average of pace sustained by him and the angle of his cross-court play, driving and volleying, when the machinery of his game is in running order, will put every opponent on the defensive, so that although he may have beautiful plans to break up Larned's game, he has no chance to execute them because he is put to it to keep Larned from rushing through. The game is not played in accordance with his plans; it is played in accordance with Larned's.

Generally speaking, the attack in tennis is so subtle that the casual observer will not notice it. If you are trying to break down a man's powerful forehand, needless to say it cannot be done by simply placing constantly to

his forehand, except, of course, when you find that for the time being he is hopelessly "off." Generally he must be drawn out of position so that when the ball goes into his forehand court, he cannot get the benefit of his stroke. He makes a defensive return instead of an offensive return. But such a maneuver is not executed every point or every fifth point. The point may actually be won by a shot to his backhand, but if his forehand drive has been so weakly defensive that you have a free drive at his backhand you have attacked his strength.

In fact, this is what is meant by attacking weakness through strength, drawing a man so far out of position that you have a real opening through which to attack his weakness. As I have said, it can only be done probably a few times during a match. It is by no means a continuous or often repeated performance, and it does not need to be.

What so many people overlook is that even in a five-set match a very few points decide it. It is not unusual to have the point-winning scores of victors and victims differ only by ten or fifteen points, and I have frequently played in matches where the difference was much smaller. Sometimes the losers win even more points than the winners.

When you keep in mind the point score, the first thing you will discover is that every single point counts. In one long match, for instance, there was a difference of only one point, and this slight difference came up for decision six different times. That is why I have cited examples that dealt with critical points. They are not the exception; they are the rule. Therefore if you attack a man's strength and win off it five points during a set, the chances are you win the set. His weakness is left more open to attack and five more points are garnered there. Another set falls to you. And as you are winning, the chances are ten to one that the luck will break your way just because you are in general carrying things through and another five points fall to you in the general "breaks." The match is decided.

It can be seen that the difference between attacking a man as he expects to be attacked, on his weakness, and finding a way to attack him unexpectedly only needs to be successful a very few times to be all-important.

CHAPTER VI

QUICK THINKING

IT has been repeated more than once in these pages that the tennis player must have an alert mind in order to reach the top. The point is so self-evident that like many self-evident things it is frequently overlooked, and so important that it is worth while citing cases in which an instant's quick thought has changed the outcome. First it is well to recall how often in long matches a surprisingly small number of points distinguishes the score of the winner from that of the loser; every point won by what may seem superfluous strategy is worth winning. Second, that the more thoroughly he understands fundamentals the quicker and more valuable deductions the player can make. If he knows his angles he can win positions which without this knowledge he would not think of attempting.

The final point in a local championship match was once gained by the following simple maneuver: A player, having been drawn far over

to his backhand near the net, volleyed weakly to his opponent's service line, leaving practically all of his own court uncovered and having no time to cover it, because by his weak volley he had brought his opponent so far in that his own position was entirely untenable. Nine players out of ten would have simply thrown up their hands and given the point away. Not so the player in question, who understood that each point counted. He turned sharply and made a furious dash into his wide-open forehand court, or rather—and this is the point—he made the motions of a furious spurt. These motions were so convincing that his opponent instead of holding to his intention to play through the wide-open court was tempted by an apparent chance to anticipate the movements of the volleyer to play to his backhand.

It was in the hope of suggesting just such a play to the mind of his opponent that the volleyer had made a lifelike dash into his open court. Not being a genuine spurt, however, he was able to turn back, meet his opponent's drive and volley for an ace. If he met the ball at all he was almost certain to volley an ace because there was hardly enough time for his adversary to get set for another shot, let alone cover any court, between the time when the ball was driven

and the time it was returned. In other words the maneuver of the "fake opening" had been worked successfully.

But why go into it in such detail, you may ask, and the answer is because it illustrates so well the difference between good tennis thinking and bad tennis thinking. Consider the thoughts of the volleyer. He knew that after his original weak volley it was impossible for him to protect his court properly and that the only way he could save himself was to make his opponent play the way he wished him to. This we know that he succeeded in doing; but had his opponent remembered his angles and position he would have known that no matter how fast the volleyer dashed into his forehand court, he would not have time to cover it; therefore instead of trying to anticipate and play back of the volleyer he should have gone ahead and followed his original intention.

It is a slight anecdote perhaps—but one which contains an important idea for the match player, for if a man can so affect another's intention that he can completely anticipate a dozen points in a match he is wasting valuable ability not to do so. In the case cited a match was won by making a naive move which was not exactly as naive as it appeared.

Still the move would have been useless unless well disguised. If that apparent spurt into the forehand court had been made clumsily the real thought back of it would have been perceived by the other player and he would not have been fooled. It is far from my intention to prove that tennis is a game for the fox, but it may be added without giving this impression that every point won by strategy begets another point. In the case cited the player who has been fooled says to himself: "Well, you did it that time but you won't do it again in a hurry," or he might have said something like that had it not been the last point. Suppose it hadn't been and that the next time the player whom I have called the volleyer made a weak volley (this time not quite so weak so that it would be possible if he were very quick to cover his forehand court), he went through the same motions of dashing forward.

It is easy to imagine that the driver remembering the former "fake opening" maneuver would refuse to be tempted to play to the volleyer's backhand and the volleyer, having anticipated this fact, would run as hard as he could, leaving his backhand court entirely uncovered and meet his adversary's drive to his forehand. The opportunity to make this dash

without thought of his backhand court was given him by his first successful strategy. But the snowball is not yet finished; it will roll up a few more points. For the driver, finding that he has been twice anticipated, once deliberately and once by good reasoning from cause to effect, will begin to feel less confident and while he is regaining his confidence he may lose two or three more points.

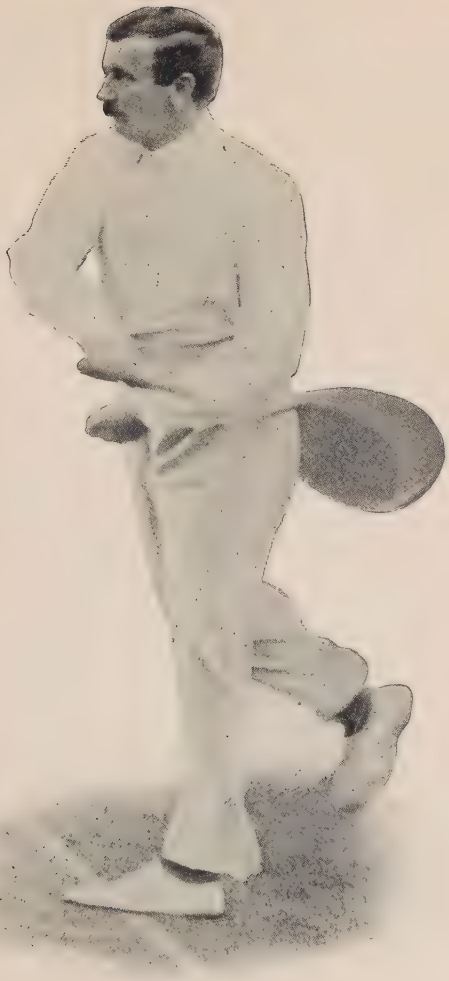
So he has a total of five points where by throwing up his hands too soon he would have been scored against. My conclusion may seem exaggerated, but I have seen exactly these results, both in my own favor and against me,—not in one or two matches but almost as a general rule. The "fake opening" is constantly attempted by players and fails more often than it succeeds, but when it does succeed, especially at a crucial point, it generally upsets the man against whom it has succeeded.

Every good player will anticipate from time to time another good player, and it is always such a pleasure to do this that a strong temptation arises to show your opponent how bright you are, which is equivalent to putting him on his guard in time to defeat your quick-wittedness. The mistake of indicating to an opponent too quickly the discoveries you have made

about his game was well illustrated in two matches which I once saw on two successive days of a tournament. After advancing a round by a victory over one man a certain player was defeated by a man not as good as the first one whom he had beaten. And this is how it happened.

The player involved in both matches possessed an extremely effective backhand drive which he almost invariably sent cross court to the opposite player's backhand. Four times he played this shot so swiftly that his adversary could not handle it; but his adversary had drawn certain conclusions. He had noticed the invariableness of the direction of the shot he found so difficult to meet. And though the play had gone against him he smiled confidently at what he had discovered and played the first shot he could deliberately to that powerful backhand. Thereupon he ran to the net, following his shot without a moment's delay and taking up a position slightly to the left of the center of his court. The backhand drive came whizzing at him exactly where he had placed himself in readiness for it and he calmly cut it off with a sharp volley for an ace. His confident smile increased.

The very next play he executed the same



C. P. DIXON

An English example of the heady, resourceful player who has reached high rank without great speed or brilliancy.

maneuver successfully. He won half a dozen points by it and then it dawned on the owner of the powerful backhand drive that a defense had been built up against his standard shot and he proceeded to vary his play, only using the drive occasionally and intermingling it with defensive lobs and floaters down the side-line. All this happened in the first few games before the match had reached an exciting point. The match ended with a victory for the man with the backhand drive, and simply because he had been shown the folly of an invariable shot before it was too late.

See what happened at the second match. The lesson of the day before had not lessened the desire to play that backhand drive, and the second opponent like the first was quick to observe the sameness of its direction, but instead of practically announcing his observation he carefully concealed it and built up the impression that he was afraid of that fast backhander by playing to his adversary's forehand. But about once in two games he somehow did play to the much feared backhand and each time he too reached the net and met the drive squarely. Anticipated so infrequently, the anticipation was not so apparent and, instead of winning six points by the little scheme as the victim of the

day before had, he won twelve points and every one of them was an important point. For he never took advantage of his anticipation unless he was forced to and then he used it for a decisive point.

The result of the match proved that just because you see that a man is doing a certain thing regularly, it is not necessary to warn him immediately what your observation has been by taking instant advantage of it. If the match is going along pretty well in your favor save up your anticipations for the time when you need them. For by scattering them through the match the chances are that you will have more opportunities to win points.

The chance to anticipate is won by a good eye and a quick mind, but it can easily be cancelled by a change in customary movements. One of the best players we have ever had nearly always fails in his efforts to create " fake openings " because, although his mind works quickly, he overacts. When he tries to draw the ball in one direction by moving in the other he lunges forward with quite a different movement from that which he uses when he is genuinely going forward to protect an opening. Half the art of anticipating is to conceal the fact that you have anticipated.

Every movement that a man makes ought to be observed and reasoned from. In doubles, for instance, how often a man will see that an alley is not well guarded and then communicate his discovery to the other team by a great show of looking away from the alley as if that would be the last place in the world to which he would play, or by changing his position as if to be fully prepared to play a cross-court shot and standing with such apparent intention to drive cross court that immediately his opponent at the net knows that the ball is coming down his alley.

He knows this by his observation of the slight changes in the other man's movements. He has in a sense re-anticipated. One of the prettiest cases of what might be called re-anticipation, resulted during a crucial game of a doubles match, in an unusual play which worked out as follows: Serving to LeRoy, whose forehand stroke on that particular day was especially vicious, Hackett, the server, found that one way to protect his service from being killed for an ace and to be able to volley offensively was to take the net at top speed and risk leaving himself defenseless against a lob, for he went in so fast and got so close to the net that he never could have stopped himself in time to go back and get under a high ball. By taking

this risk he managed to cut off LeRoy's deadly drive two or three times in succession.

Just then his partner saw the other team exchange a remark and as he was going into position he whispered to Hackett to rush in at full speed again. Hackett did and LeRoy, seeing that Hackett could cut off a drive and also that there was no hope for Hackett to recover his balance and cover a lob, played a safe easy lob over Hackett's head. But Hackett's partner, having anticipated this play the instant he saw the other team speak to each other, left his own court entirely unprotected to run in behind his team mate and was on hand perfectly ready to kill the easy lob for an ace. LeRoy had anticipated Hackett's rush to the net, but on the other hand Hackett's team mate had anticipated this anticipation. He had re-anticipated.

I have made the claim that knowledge of fundamentals suggests quick thoughts to a player which otherwise he would not have, and I have implied that this is perhaps especially so in respect to angles. More than once in a match the volleyer will find that he has not played deeply enough and consequently has little time to protect himself from being passed. Under such circumstances he will feel that it may be wiser to jump to the side instead of to

the front. But if he remembers that with his adversary well in it is almost impossible to cover a wide space of territory he will be wise enough to jump in and try to cut the ball off before it has gone too far to the side. Watching the racket of his opponent as a cat would a mouse and springing forward the instant the other man indicates by the slightest move to which side of the court he is going to drive, a quick thinker may be able by his forward jump to meet the ball, and, of course, he will gain the advantage of leaving little time for the driver to recover.

Such a shot has the appearance of being and is, in a sense, lucky, for the volleyer has jumped in with his racket up, trusting that he may meet the ball, not knowing at all whether he will have time to reach it. But it is his knowledge of angles that has made him think of moving in the way most possible to save himself, and if he does meet the ball when he himself is on top of the net and the other man is well in he wins an ace, nearly every time. Here again it is not only the point won but the effect on the other player that counts. For when a man has his opponent practically passed and finds instead that an ace has been counted against him it shakes his confidence.

It is again the mental effect of one player's mind working more quickly than the other's. And this effect cannot be dwelt on too insistently. One or two lucky shots—the luck of the quick thinker who has at least made the right move to justify his luck—one or two almost insignificant little strategies successfully executed, and from six to a dozen points follow in their wake—certainly enough of a margin to insure a victory.

Conversely, nothing upsets a man more than to upset his strategy. He tries the "fake opening" and you drive down his forehand while he impotently dashes back to his backhand, looking extremely foolish. Or he springs forward to the left, thinking he has anticipated your direction, only to find that you have beautifully concealed your direction or intentionally misled him and have played to the right. Then it is your turn to gain the advantage, for he will slow up, thinking he has been too quick for his own good, and refrain from acting quickly enough even when he does anticipate correctly.

But as a matter of fact when a man anticipates wrongly he is not being quick; he is merely being thoughtless. Excepting in a case of last resort a player should never be caught moving one way when the ball is passing him

the other. The primary rule of anticipating—watching the other man's racket—is capable of being followed with different degrees of keenness. There is the man who knows the rule and follows it fairly well and the other man who watches at the rate of one hundred per cent, the man for instance who knows when McLoughlin is going to serve swiftly and when his service is going to break. This man is not fooled by the concealed racket. He does not decide because he sees a racket moving toward the ball with the face ready to cut the ball extremely that the ball will not be hit squarely. He sees exactly how the racket meets the ball and co-ordinates with this fact every movement made by the server or driver as the case may be.

And at no time must this keen observation be followed by equally keen deductions so much as when a player is in the position of volleyer. For then time is limited. If the volleyer is fooled by the concealed racket he may not and probably will not have time to redeem his error. It is not merely a question of seeing where the ball is going that the volleyer has to decide instantaneously, but he must see what kind of a blow the ball has received. For if the ball has been cut he will have to volley differently from

what he would if it has been topped. I've known first-rate players to volley into the net simply because they did not watch the other man's racket and see what kind of a twist he gave the ball.

A quick volley is not a stroke that will overcome the twist of the ball and give its own impulse as a drive will. Often the volley can merely be a meeting of the ball with a wrist movement to give it snap. A topped drive when met by the volleyer will catch the strings of his racket and bound with a slight upward motion. The racket held in the same way to meet a cut will result in a net—that is, if one is volleying very close to the net. The difference then between accurate watching and fair watching is the difference between a miss and a win.

I think I have explained fully the offensive lob—the lob played over a man's head so low that he can't possibly go back to recover it. This is a shot that the volleyer has to anticipate or lose. If he anticipates it he can nearly always kill it. It must therefore be played subtly, with the movement well concealed. Concealing the play on the one hand and on the other concealing the fact that you have discovered what the other's man play is going

to be are equally important. Both require quick thinking.

"Put the ball where the other fellow ain't," has been so often repeated laughingly that some players have decided that a better rule is to put the ball where the other fellow is, or rather where he was. They play for the narrower rather than the wider opening, the idea being that a man will generally move toward his more unprotected court and that by playing into his protected court you will catch him by surprise. There is nothing illogical in this thinking. It is only illogical to repeat the play too often—to repeat it until the other man expects it and is ready for it.

One very good player who wins many matches by following this plan of attack consistently occasionally meets an adversary who has analyzed the plan so fully that he can force it to react on the player guided by it. For a slight movement into the unprotected court will nearly always draw the ball into the protected court, so that, instead of having to defend a large area of the court, you have only a small area to defend. Playing discreetly against the player in question so that he does not see too clearly that you know he is nearly always going to put the ball in the narrower

opening results in giving you half a court's advantage over him, for while you have to defend only about half of your court you still have the whole of his in which to maneuver. Founded on the idea of anticipation, a plan of attack played so consistently that it advertises its strategies practically eliminates anticipation.

On one occasion I heard a player remark to his partner: "Any time we need a point I have it for you." The partner understood this cryptic remark perfectly. He was so experienced and quick that he translated it into: "One of our opponents always plays a certain kind of ball in a certain way, and if we need a point I will send him the kind of ball which will draw the shot expected. But let's not give away our information unless we need to." The time came when the point was needed; it was played for; the expected shot came back and, being expected, was killed for the point. It annoyed the player who had had his favorite shot killed very much, for that was the one shot he thought least likely to be returned for an ace. And while his irritation lasted another point was taken.

That brings us again to the question of the mental effect of a luck shot or a complete anticipation when you are the victim. Perfectly

naturally it affects one, but should it? There is no excuse for a man to give away points simply because his temper is ruffled. It becomes one of the duties of every player to train himself so that nothing which his opponent does will disturb him. Some good players have at times allowed their game to be quite broken up by the mental reaction of their adversary's game.

Hackett, a player known for his good judgment, understands this point so thoroughly that on several occasions when the player against him started off at a whirlwind pace he decided that something unusual had to be done to stand off defeat. Early in the match therefore he would ease up his own game until he appeared practically to be giving it away. The awaited development took place. His opponent would become so affected by the ease with which he was defeating Hackett that he would let down his game until it did not approach its usual standard. At that psychological point it would come upon him with surprise that Hackett had suddenly stiffened his game and was playing much more powerfully than during the more recent part of the match. The opponent, a little nervous at the change, would then try to rouse himself from the slump he had taken.

More often than not wildness ensued. Before this stage had passed and recovery was complete, the match would be won by Hackett.

If you say that this is carrying strategy beyond its legitimate bounds the answer is that no player is justified in allowing this kind of strategy to be carried out against him. For if the player keeps his head during such a maneuver it amounts merely to his having had a certain number of points given to him, and if the gift results in his becoming overconfident and careless the blame belongs to him and not to the man who has been clever enough to outgeneral him.

Everyone knows that typical player, found in almost every club, who is always called a "dub," although his club-ranking is high. He is called a "dub" because his shots are always soft and safe and he never plays out, and he is called a "dub" by the very men he beats regularly. They swear about him, but they do not beat him because they allow his pattering game so to affect their own game that they cannot play even well enough to defeat him. This ought never to happen, but it does constantly.

But we are straying a little too far afield, and should return to make a few final statements about quick thinking. The only way to

keep yourself from being constantly anticipated is to keep the other man constantly surprised. When both players are well back the game becomes academic, good stroke against good stroke, because the ball generally travels between shots for a long enough time to enable each player to reach it. It is in the short-court game and in volleying that the quick thinker wins his advantage over the man with a slower and less alert mind.

CHAPTER VII

DOUBLES

ONE and one make two, and perhaps some people think that the problem of forming a good doubles team is as simple as the arithmetical problem of adding one and one, and that, by the same process of playing on the same side of the court, two good singles players make one good doubles team. There are several reasons why this is not the case, the first being that the two games differ in theory to a far greater extent than is immediately apparent. And not only do they differ, but they oppose each other, the best thing to do in the one case being frequently the worst in the other. So that a wonderful singles player may be only an ordinary good doubles player, just as a great first baseman may play second base competently rather than brilliantly.

In fact, in speaking of a remarkable tennis player accuracy demands that the expression be qualified. A man may be master of both games,

but generally when we call a man a great tennis player, we mean that he is a great singles player and it does not follow that he is therefore a great doubles player. No one ever played singles better than Larned at his best; many people have played doubles better than Larned at his best. And Larned is not an exception. Other great singles players have not led at doubles, while many, who have been preeminent in the latter game, have never been champions at singles. What team ever had a sounder knowledge of doubles, for instance, than the many-times champions, Hackett and Alexander? And how rare a phenomenon it is to find a man like McLoughlin, champion in the same year in both games!

The reason why an unusual singles player often fails to maintain a correspondingly high standard in playing doubles, will be explained in further detail; meanwhile it may be stated that the first essential of a doubles team is teamwork. The best players in the world, if they do not work together, if they do not form a perfect machine, may be beaten by inferior players who have mastered the difficulties of teamwork and play as a unit. And these difficulties are very great. They involve a thorough understanding of the fine points of doub-

les and a very happy combination of personality. Some men, try as they will, cannot play together. With the best intentions in the world they break up each other's game instead of supplementing it.

It is compulsory that teammates work together harmoniously, that each show the other that he has perfect confidence in him, that if a mistake is made it is the team's mistake, not the partner's. A moment's irritation toward a partner may destroy coordination just long enough to lose a match. For it is no less true of doubles than of singles that twelve points are a sufficient margin to win a five-set match. The ideal team plays and thinks together all the time and is never at variance. Until individual players combine in perfect unison they will not attain great success, no matter if they have tied in singles for the championship of the world.

Before two players begin to make a good doubles team they must have caught the spirit of teamwork. Even if with the spirit of teamwork they have also the equipment of great singles players, they are still far from being a good team because the repertory of shots in each game is so different. The same shot will not be equally effective in both kinds of play.

THE DOHERTY BROTHERS

Doubles Champions England eight times and of America twice; winners of the Davis Cup, 1903

The doubles player must have a much more varied repertory than the singles player.

Take, for example, the deep shot, one which above all others the singles player should have, so to speak, at his racket's end. It is a safe maxim in singles that the nearer a man drives the ball to his opponent's base-line the better. But to travel far a ball must also travel comparatively high and pass over the net at a sufficient distance above it, at a height in fact, which usually means, when this shot is played against a doubles team, the loss of the point. In other words, the very shot that is characteristic of good singles play is almost fatal in doubles, because the net is practically twice as strongly defended, the extra width of the double court being insufficient to offset the fact of having two men at the net.

In doubles the one shot that corresponds to the long, deep shot in singles is a short, sharp, angular shot played as closely to the net as possible. And frequently it has been seen that the more thoroughly a man is grounded in singles and intelligently grasps the theory of that game, the harder it is for him to master this shot which plays so effective a part in the strategy of doubles. Larned does not like the shot; Whitman never played it as effectively as Al-

exander and Hackett, both of whom are by no means such masters of the long, deep shot as Larned and Whitman. The deep shot in singles will keep the adversary from taking the net, but in doubles either you have the net or your opponent has the net all the time, and this is a point to keep in mind when analyzing and comparing the two games, since it is really responsible for the difference between them.

In singles one man defends twenty-seven feet of net; the doubles court is thirty-six feet wide, leaving eighteen feet for each man. With the individual player having nine feet less to defend it is evident that the opening for a passing shot is very much more limited. A ball that passes over the net six inches or a foot above it is almost certain to be killed for an ace. Therefore closeness to the net rather than length is the test of a good shot in doubles. The singles player is compelled to shorten his game, and the better he is at singles the harder he finds it to make this diametrical change in the purpose of his shot.

Playing against one man at the net, the court being twenty-seven feet wide, the most obvious passing shot is down the side-line, and this shot is certainly a most helpful stroke for the singles player to have at his command. If he is

an accurate player, unless the net man keeps him far back by deep volleying, he will have many a good opportunity to gain a point by passing his opponent down the side-line. In any case he will not be tempted to play down the center line.

But in doubles the hardest shot for a team to handle is one down the center of the court, for this is more likely than any other to affect their mental balance. While trying to cover it they may interfere, or one partner may let the ball pass, thinking the other partner has it. This is a shot which the habitual singles player often overlooks in favor of the shot down the side-lines, which in doubles is difficult to play successfully on account of the added height of the net and the fact that generally speaking the opening down the side-line is comparatively small. The openings in doubles do not correspond to those in singles, and one who is not accustomed to this fact frequently plays for the opening he was in the habit of finding when playing singles, only to discover that there is no such opening in doubles. One of the first dangers then for the habitual singles player to overcome, when he takes up doubles seriously, is playing for the opening that is not there and neglecting the one that is.

Together with this danger is that of not shortening his game, of forgetting that in singles maximum length is the aim and in doubles minimum length. To make this somewhat arbitrary statement lucid will be easy after showing how important a part the net position plays in doubles. One has only to watch a match between two good teams to come to the conclusion that victory in doubles depends on ability to win, and to play, the net position. Such a conclusion coincides pretty accurately with the facts.

It has been shown that it is possible to argue intelligently whether the net or the back-court position is stronger in singles; but in doubles there is not the slightest room for argument, for an active sure volleyer can certainly protect eighteen feet of net. Doubles is essentially a net game, a game of short, sharp volleying. The Dohertys soon discovered this fact after their first visit to America, and thereupon played closer to the net than had been the custom for English players.

Teammates should always be on a line parallel with the base-line. The only exception where two men played a remarkable game and stayed, one at the net and the other back, were Risely and Smith, men so extraordinary each in

his own department that they were able to break the most fundamental rule of good teamwork. Risely at his best played astonishing tennis. Playing against the Dohertys on one occasion, he served five aces in succession. Moreover, he could volley with great speed at a sharp angle. But even with two such unusual players working together and although they won the English championship and other important tournaments, they never attained consistency because theoretically their game was not sound, All that they succeeded in doing was to bring an unsound game to its highest point by phenomenal individual capacity.

To repeat, the net is the winning position in doubles even as it is in singles, but while theoretically the position is untenable in singles because an inhumanly perfect back-court game would always win in singles, in doubles the net position is practically tenable. Admitting that two good men can actually cover the entire width of the court, it becomes clear that to have the service is a great advantage to a doubles team. It may be reckless to make a statement in figures without having the exact data at hand to prove it, but I believe that in matches between high class teams, four-fifths of the games are won by the side holding the service. If

this is true, this is further proof that the net is the winning position, for in doubles the serving side invariably follows the service into the net. There are no exceptions to this rule as in singles. Often you see a good player stay back, but never a good team.

So much is it the case that the net position holds the advantage that it has been frequently discussed in various committees whether it would not be a good thing to add from one and a half to two feet to each side of the doubles court, in order to provide an opening for a passing shot. A good example of how much more strongly the net is defended in doubles than in singles may be shown by referring to Hackett's service, a slow ball placed with great accuracy. So slow a service even when so skillfully placed is far from the ideal service in singles, but the records show that in doubles Hackett very seldom loses his service.

His method of service leaves him perfectly balanced for his rush to the net. Then, too, he comes in very fast, and the opposing team, even if they play his service severely, can seldom smash it through for a win because the limitations of the passing shot are so very much greater in doubles. With Hackett and an equally good volleyer at the net any but an ex-

ceptional smashing shot will probably be nipped in the bud, the speed of the opponent's ground stroke only adding to the sharpness of the returning volley.

Anyone can satisfy himself of the advantage to a team of holding the service by keeping track of the points won and lost by the side at the net which are due to a shot from the opponents in the back court or to the absolute errors of the team at the net. If he does this he will find that the net team wins the majority of points, and even crediting the base-line people with an earned point every time the net team misses a ball that is difficult to handle, by adding the points actually won by the net players and the easy opportunities missed by them, he will find that the total makes an overwhelming majority over the points won by the back-court players.

In one hundred points I believe that the net will win sixty in spite of, say, fifteen errors. If then the net can give fifteen per cent of errors and still win sixty out of a hundred points, is any further argument necessary to prove that the advantage held by the net side is overwhelming? To escape apparent exaggeration the obvious statement might be added that of course this calculation takes for granted that

the net team understands volleying thoroughly, for the man who is not a proficient volleyer has no place on a doubles team.

Besides coming in fast and evenly, it is necessary for the stationary man at the net, when his side is serving, to cover the proper amount of court. The man running in needs the maximum of protection as he has to cover to his own outside line. Therefore the man at the net must give as much protection as possible down the center. Over and over again teams get into trouble because the man at the net thinks only of his own alley and of the balls that come straight at him.

The stationary man should watch his partner's service, see exactly where it lands, note the striker's position as he makes the return, size up from these two facts the possible angle of the return, and act accordingly. Even good players have been known to stand still at the net waiting until the ball was on its return flight and then reaching it if they could. Nine times out of ten these men stand too close to their alley and leave a fine central opening for the opponents to drive either low to the server's backhand as he comes in or else, if the server is ready for this shot, he is drawn so far in that the strikers can cross-court far out into the

server's alley. And all this that the man at the net may be passed down his own alley.

After all, the alley shot that the stationary man is so likely to be afraid of is more or less of a bugaboo. It is not an easy shot for the opponents to play because the goal is narrow and the net is higher there than elsewhere. It would surprise some tennis followers to find how few of these passes are made successfully in a good doubles match. To get by the man at the net the shot must have a certain speed, otherwise he can jump into it and kill it. If the alley is not left wide open the striker will probably lose more alley shots than he can win, for it has to be played quickly, the intention of playing it must be hidden, and the net just enough higher to lead the striker into miscalculations. Moreover, this shot allows of no inaccuracy.

Those two alternatives which, by hanging far over his alley, the stationary man leaves open to his adversaries, that is the pass down the center or the wide cross-court shot, are very much easier and safer to execute. The net is lower proportionately in the center and the court is wider than in singles. But if the stationary man is not too far away from the center a normal cross-court shot can't pass the

server coming in, while the net man can protect his team against the center shot.

This does not mean, however, that the stationary man should take the greatest possible risk in leaving his alley open. For although I have called him that, there really is no such person on a high class doubles team. The net man should always be moving a little more apparently than in reality. In this way he can keep from being a mark for the striker. His continuous moving has a tendency to push the striker's shot over toward the server. For if the net man can keep the striker guessing as to whether he is really far over toward his own alley or far over toward the center, the striker is very likely to take the safe and sure course of playing a wide cross-court shot so that he will be certain of not putting the ball into the hands of the man at the net.

But even when there is a quick-thinking, active man at the net, the server must come in fast and be prepared for three possible general shots, the wide cross-court shot far to the outside line on the server's side, the drive down the center, or a lob over his head. As in singles, when running into the net, the start should be at top speed, so that the finish may be slow enough for the runner to change his course in-

stantly and go to either side or back. If he is almost in by the time the striker hits the ball, he can see the direction of the striker's shot and have time to waylay it. Just as the net man should always keep up the appearance of moving and never let the other side know exactly where he is, similarly the server should not come in straight in order that the striker may not know exactly where there is an opening.

The more differently the server comes in each time the less liable the striker is to get his eye on an opening. The server should also serve from different places and appear when rushing in to be heading where he isn't. By this little maneuver he can sometimes tempt the striker to drive exactly where he most wants him to. It is another good maxim, and in doubles it is particularly good, that the hardest man to catch on the tennis court is the man whose whereabouts you don't know. The openings in doubles, already limited, become still more so if a team understands the game well enough never to give their opponents a set opening.

Right in line with this point is the placing of the service which is an essential factor in doubles. The server can help his partner to

protect the center by so placing the service that his partner's alley is automatically closed to the opponents, and he can further help himself by sizing up the direction of the striker. For instance, if he hits to the backhand of most right-hand players, he may be fairly certain that the return will come down the center.

In covering lobs each man should try to take his own lobs and the less crossing the better. Apropos a word may be said about the reverse formation of Ward and Davis, which has been so much discussed and in some cases rather misleadingly. The fact is that this was a freak formation which worked out successfully while the twist service bothered players, as it does no longer, and was used by a team of extraordinarily good volleyers. The best use to which it may now be put is as an occasional variant, to keep adversaries from settled shots or to break up an unusually short cross-court shot. The idea that this is a good formation only for a right and left handed partner is a sophistry, for it can be used once in a while by any team; but for constant use I believe it has more disadvantages than benefits.

CHAPTER VIII

DOUBLES-PLAY (CONTINUED)

IN dwelling on the importance of the net position in doubles it has been brought out that the side serving always takes the net behind the service. And it is because they are able to do this that they have such a substantial handicap over the strikers. The surest way to maintain this handicap and use it to best advantage is to have under almost perfect control an offensive first service.

It is most important, in playing doubles, to get the first service in because that is a step toward putting the back-court men on the defensive. Even in these days when the old-fashioned slow second service has been abandoned by most good and all great players, it is only human for a man to play his second ball a little more conservatively than his first. He had much better be sure of his first service. For the more daring the first service is, and the less often it goes in, the more likely the second ball is to be much slower. From a smashing first

service that goes in only occasionally there is bound to be a reaction in playing the second ball.

The server should study the striker just as a pitcher studies a batter. He should notice his position and learn just where his strong and weak points are in fore and backhand. The first service should not only go in nine out of ten times, but it should always avoid the striker's strength and find his weakness, so that during the server's rush to the net the striker will be put to it to make a safe rather than an attacking return.

When the serving side has run in and taken up the net position they should do one of two things, volley an ace or volley deep. And this is a good point to remember: don't hurry the kill. Rather force it to arrive inevitably by putting the strikers more and more on the defensive until the opportunity to make the kill is something like accepting a gift. For after all the strategy of the net position amounts to a gradual forcing of the strikers into such a predicament that they can only make an easy return. Then having maneuvered the strikers into an easy return, the net players reap the full advantage of their position and volley for an ace.

There are three ways of volleying for an ace, mere speed, hitting the ball so hard that it can't be returned, a method that McLoughlin uses to great effect, or stopping, that is, just catching the ball and dropping it over the net so gently that the strikers either can't come in fast enough to reach it, or if they do reach it, are forced to pop it back because the ball has such a low bound and is in so close to the net that a dangerous return can't be made from it. Only an easy lift shot can be played from it.

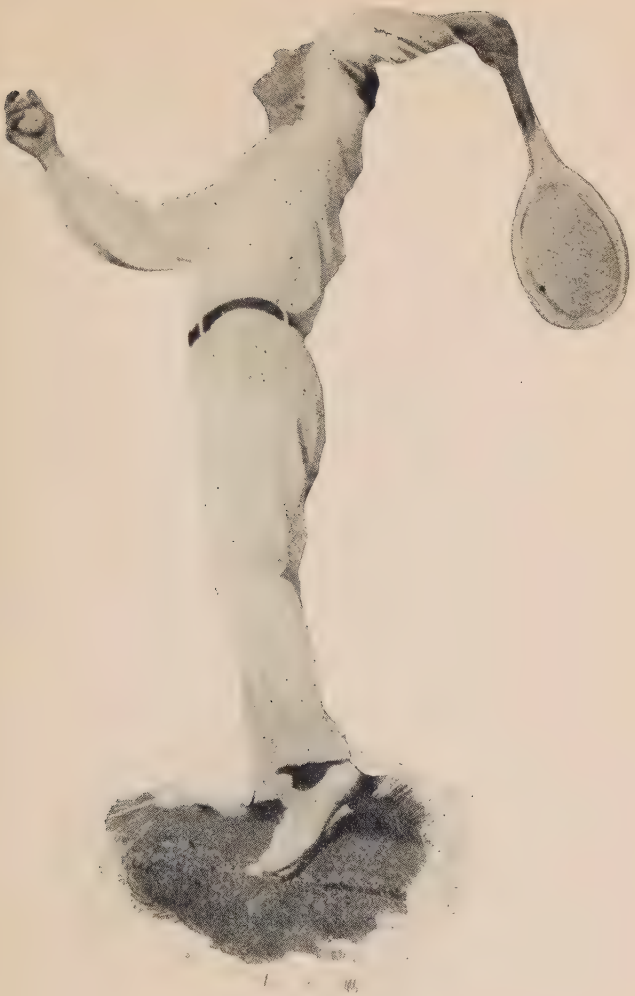
The third method is the sharp angle, that is playing so wide to the side that the strikers cannot get out fast enough to cover it. Even if they do cover it, a large gap is left in their defense which the keen volleyer will take advantage of on the succeeding shot. Unless one of these three shots can be played, the fast, the soft, or the sharp angle shot, the net players must volley deep.

This, of course, is on the same principle that one plays deep in singles. Off the ground in doubles it has been shown that the ideal stroke is short, close to the net, angular; because the ground stroke is always played against a net position so that depth which in singles is essentially for the purpose of keeping adversaries away from the net is superfluous in doubles, not

to say dangerous, on account of the high flight.

But the volley is the department in which the doubles takes up the fundamental principle of depth. If the team at the net doesn't volley deeply they will be in trouble all the time. The short volley brings the strikers in and redoubles the effectiveness of their position. There is less time for those at the net to see where the ball is going, and after seeing there is less time to reach it. The strikers can drive harder and closer to the net from the service line, for example, than from the back line or from a few feet back of the back line, which is where they should be forced to stay. When good deep volleyers once have the net position they are almost certain to get a splendid chance to kill. And the easiest way to lose the chance is to try to kill a ball that is unsafe to kill and should be played safe and deep. Both in singles and doubles it is a good practice to stick to fundamental principles until a chance comes to finish the point. It is sure to come.

In singles it is harder when at the net to wait for the kill because the man at the net is always taking a certain amount of risk. Theoretically it is always possible to pass him. In net position properly played is tenable and the doubles it is easy to wait for a kill because the



BEALS C. WRIGHT

With the possible exception of Brookes of Australia, probably the most effective volleyer the game has ever produced.

striker is at a very real and constant disadvantage. An uncertain kill results often in a weak shot and gives the striker a chance to play offensively. Therefore the net players should play safe or kill hard. Neither play timidly nor injure the ball, but strike the medium of clean-cut, severe strokes. Then speed is gained without loss of balance.

One of the illusions about doubles is that it is only half as much strain on a man physically as singles. It is not as much constant strain as singles, but a hard doubles match is no place for a loafer. The service in doubles is always hard, for the server is obliged to come in on every serve,—in singles a man may sometimes stay back. And he should come in fast no matter whether he thinks his serve is good or bad. If he lingers to find out whether his ball is going in he will leave a hole for the strikers to play through. And it is a temptation not to run in fast when the server is beginning to feel the strain of the match and is more than half certain that his shot is going out.

This is why so many nearly ace services are played in vain. The server, thinking the ball is going out, fails to run in, the striker manages to reach the serve and barely return it and by a shot that would have been easily played for an

ace had the server been in for the volley, the striker wins the shot. This has happened over and over again. It is the penalty paid by laziness. And it is not playing the game.

Since the server must make a dash to the net every time he serves, it is easy to calculate how much energy is lost through the habit of missing the first service. Another reason why a server sometimes hangs back is that he is afraid of a lob, and it is much easier to wait for it than to stop suddenly in the rush to the net and wrench oneself, as one often has to, to go back and cover a lob. Even at the risk of punishing himself the server must never lag coming in.

In case the striker puts up a very good lob it may be that he and his partner will attempt the maneuver of running in under it to volley the smash. In that case the man at the net who takes the lob should be warned by his partner that the strikers are running in under the lob. If the strikers stay back a difficult lob should be returned deep and not too hard. That gives the net players time to return to their positions at the net and leaves the strikers far back out of harm's way.

But, on the other hand, if the strikers run in under a lob the ball should not be played deep and easy, as that will give the incoming strikers

time to volley the return and a chance to play their shot severely. Warned that the strikers are coming in, the man taking the lob should hit it down sharply so that it will have speed and also go to the strikers' feet and be that much more difficult to handle. The net players cannot take it for granted that the strikers will stay back under a lob.

And this is why it is a good thing to try to hold the rather untenable position of coming in under a lob. It makes the net man watch the court. This in turn takes his eye off the ball as it is falling, and sometimes he does not get his eye back on the ball, and what might have been a firm smash becomes a ragged one. Going in under a lob might be called an untenable position that sometimes succeeds in itself and has the collateral effect of keeping the men at the net guessing, thereby making it as hard as possible for them to handle the lob.

It is well to remember that in doubles the partner who lags is not only putting himself in a less fortunate position, but he is needlessly embarrassing the man with whom he is playing. If a player has to look back to see where his partner is sending the ball and then turn to see what the opponents do with it, he is not so able to take care of a ball driven at him as he

would be if he could see his partner and the opponents at a glance. This can be done if there is no lagging on the part of one man or the other and they stay on a parallel line.

When circumstances bring all four men to the net the safest place to put the ball is down the center, although, of course, this is generally a situation when none of the players has a chance to do anything but send the ball as best he can. However, if a man keeps his mind on the center opening, he will find it a great help when involved in the general disorder which ensues with all the players camped at the net.

One of the faults of the inexperienced doubles player which is most persistent is standing still. In discussing the position of the singles player I spoke of always moving toward the center of the possible angle of the return rather than toward the center of the court. This is one of those necessities in doubles that is often overlooked. But no partner can do justice to his team unless he moves after every shot to the center of the angle of the return. In other words, both men must constantly change their position, moving back and forth toward one side or the other according to where they have sent the ball. If the net man has volleyed deep into the right hand both players

move across to the right. The right hand player thereby protects the shot down his own side line and the left hand player protects the cross-court shot down the central diagonal of the court.

He can move sometimes almost to the center of the court because the ball coming at a wide angle to his left has a very small opening and is likely to go out. Similarly if the ball is volleyed to the left both players move to the left. While if one of the net men has volleyed down the center of the court both members of the team close up on the center. It is essential that the instant the net players volley they should see what change should be made in their position and act accordingly. Otherwise one player or the other will be put in the position of being passed apparently when the chances are that it is the fault of his partner for not coming over to cover the opening properly. Every ball that goes down the particular side of the court occupied by one player does not by any means belong, so to speak, to him. It all depends on circumstances and the player who stays serenely in his own court all the time is not always doing his duty to the team under all circumstances.

But it is not merely a question of covering

the width of the court. The net players should be on the lookout for every possible opportunity to move in closer to the net. And when they have volleyed so deeply and effectively that they are enabled to move in they should be up and advancing, for the closer they are to the net the better. Whenever they can move in within six feet of the net they are simply wasting their opportunities by not doing so. Every inch nearer the net increases the possible angle of the volley, a self-evident fact often overlooked, and thereby many a volley that might be turned into an ace is forced into being only a good defensive shot.

The stationary man at the net (at least so-called stationary) ought not to stand in too close to the net until it is too late for the striker to see exactly where he is. Of course, the first service allows the net man to stand closer, but it is not necessarily wisest to take advantage of this fact. If he stands in as closely as he can on the first service, he will be compelled to fall back on an easy second service and that will give spirit to the strikers. It is better for him to be back and then move in fast when the first service goes in. Then he can appear to be just as much on the offensive when the second ball is served by his partner as when the first service

is played and he gains thereby a certain mental effect.

Once in a while the man standing at the net crosses over to the other side of the court to volley the cross shot of the striker and the server comes in the other way and takes up the position occupied by the stationary man. Used successfully, this is rather a spectacular change in regulation play. But the truth is that poaching is more likely to break up team play than win any considerable number of points and unless the change in position is perfectly timed the strikers can almost certainly take the point.

If the server plays a slow service he should send it down the center because then his partner can give him the maximum protection on a return to the center. If the service is a wide service it should be fast so that the striker cannot get round far enough to play across, but must play down his side line or else down the center. Then the stationary man moves far over to his own side of the court and the server runs into the center.

It is all very well for the server to do exactly as he pleases, but what in the meanwhile is the striker doing to upset the equanimity of the server? Needless to say he is doing his best to prevent the server from carrying out

his arch schemes. The server attacks the striker's weakness, but this should not be an easy matter for the striker is bound to protect his weakness. He should cover his weakness without leaving the court uncovered. This, of course, applies to match play. In practice every player should strengthen his weakness, not protect it. The backhand, if the weakness lies there ought never to be protected in practice, but in matches unless a team wishes to give them away, they must protect their weaknesses as much as possible and as correctly as possible.

The server should keep the striker as far back as possible when he is taking the service. Similarly the striker should stand in as far as he dares and force the service all the time, not standing an inch farther back than he is compelled to do so that his turn will reach the net as quickly as possible and leave the smallest margin of time to the net men to cover his drive.

Generally speaking the base-line is about the best position for the strikers to occupy, but like the men at the net they too come in as much as circumstances will allow them. If the men at the net are short volleyers, the back court men should keep in farther. Similarly if the wind

is in favor of the strikers and against the volleyers the back court men should move in because a short volley is almost certain to result. If the wind favors the net men, on the other hand, the strikers should move back, going perhaps outside the court. The strikers should be forever pushing in toward the net ready for the first instantaneous opportunity to snatch it out of the possession of their adversaries. They should be on their toes all the time like runners waiting for the pistol and not let the slightest chance slip in which to dash forward. The ability of a team to force the net position is what makes it win.

Since the net position is the winning one it follows that the team most able to secure the net, is most likely to win. The margin of victory rests in seizing the net when, so to speak, it is not your turn to have it. This can only be done by continuous forcing and most alert attention to every little break made by the men who already have the net. The opportunity may come in an instant and must be taken at once.

There is such a thing as going too close to the net and simply courting being lobbed over, particularly when the partner is serving. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that more

points are lost than gained by standing closer than twelve feet from the net, except in cases of jumping in to meet a return.

But to return to the troubles of the strikers, they can not plan how to return a good fast first service. The best that can be done with a very fast, well placed first service is to return it as well as one can. But with the second service the back court men can lay plans to capture the net by driving through, down the alley, down the center or cross court, or they can lob or play a slow ball to the server's feet. This last shot should always be followed into the net. But the slow ball can't be played from a fast first service. It must be an accurate shot and the reaction from a fast ball is too great to permit of its being placed accurately.

It is not a good idea for the striker to move in very noticeably when the first service has been found to be a fault. For if he does he may draw a hard ball from the server which, with the striker too far in, may result in a service ace or a bad miss by the striker. Let the striker stay back until he sees that the second service is going to be slow and then move in rapidly in order to be as far in as possible when he drives the ball.

There is danger in driving a slow service too

hard because the striker has to give all the force to his shot and not getting the benefit of any rebound and being far in, he is very apt to drive the ball out. If the slow service bounds high the best return is one with as much speed as is safe and as much top as possible so that it will drop sharply and have to be taken low by the net players. From a low, easy service the best return is to lob or play the ball easily just over the net. The low bound near the net is always most effectively returned with a chop stroke.

In the repertory of the doubles player the chop stroke is a necessity and it is a stroke that Larned, for instance, would never learn for fear of putting his drive off. A few experiments in trying to drive a low, easy bound near the net will convince anyone that the ball cannot be handled consistently in this manner.

It is the part of the strikers to make the net men keep from coming in too close to the net. They should not allow the stationary man to stand on top of the net, but keep him frightened a little by playing over his head and driving him back. The stationary man should also be kept from moving in too far to the center by the striker's occasionally playing down his alley. Besides preventing the stationary man from be-

ing too close in or toward the center, the striker should watch the server acutely to see if he is lazy about coming in fast and take every chance he has to play a sharp cross court. This will bring the server in fast. It may, after it has been played too successfully, bring him in very fast and then there is a chance that a lob will find him unprepared to stop and go back.

Good head work on the part of the strikers will at least make the net players work hard to maintain their handicap in having the net position. Ward and Wright, probably the greatest volleying team ever produced in America, protected their center to an exaggerated extent. That central pathway which is such a weakness with many teams was not so with them. Time and time again I have seen them jump into the center to volley the racket of one player coming in right behind the racket of the other. And that is the best way to protect the center alley, both going for it without any polite "after you."

A few final suggestions have been found useful through experience. Volley deep when you are at the net unless you are trying to win the point on that particular shot. In general when playing a short volley chop the ball so that the bound will be slight and when playing back

drive with the utmost top so that the ball will break with a sharp drop. The greater the break the better.

Having spoken of Ward and Wright as one of the greatest of offensive teams, it may clear up some of the points that arise in doubles competition to explain why they were so capable in this direction and yet did not rise to the level attained by Hackett and Alexander. In the first place, Ward and Wright were both great volleyers and served most effectively. In a word, they could take the net and play it beautifully. But neither of them was exceptionally severe off the ground. The result is they could not play through the opposing team with anything like the effectiveness with which they could hold the net once they had won it.

Hackett and Alexander were never the equal of Ward and Wright at their best on the offensive side, but they quite out-classed Ward and Wright as strikers for both played severely off the ground. Their much higher average from the back court made up for their slightly smaller average from the net.

The ideal doubles player volleys and smashes effectively, has a chop stroke perfectly in control, and uses with approximate certainty a topped, sharp breaking drive.

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL POINTS OF STRATEGY

EVEN at the risk of repeating myself, it is worth while to insist that the beginner at tennis should devote himself exclusively to form and attain proficiency in service, ground stroke, volleying, and smashing before taking up actual play seriously. And to this end he should put himself under a good professional or, failing such an opportunity, he should watch good players and develop the habit of stroke analysis. I should advise every player not even to try to win a point until he feels conscious of good form and ability to handle all kinds of shots. When he really begins to play tennis he should be in a position to take up strategy. And from the first he should devote himself to the thought of building up a varied and able attack.

Players become interested in competition before they are ready for it and although it may seem more fun to *play* than to *practice* they make a mistake by not playing for the fu-

ture rather than the present. Play for the future and stick to fundamental principles until they become second nature. Always play in good form with a free swing, a well timed stroke and the eye on the ball.

In addition to form the beginner should remember that the habit of thinking and acting promptly is the one to develop from the start. Never lag with mind or body, and strengthen your game evenly, advancing all departments of it at once. It may seem to be giving too serious attention to a game, but the fact is, as one of our greatest players said, it is a good rule never to fool on the tennis court. When you are too tired to do your best, it is time to stop.

In developing an attack there are a few general points that seem to me wise not to forget. Study your opponent and learn to anticipate. Vary your attack constantly so that you yourself as an object of study become as elusive as possible. Remember that the man who has learned to *think* tennis as well as play all the various shots, will always win over the man who relies more on muscle than brains. The ideal attack involves the defense, for every shot should be played with a plan back of it to force the opponent out of position. Except in

a few rare cases where one is caught and can only scramble after the ball every shot should be an offensive shot. If you learned to attack from the first it will save you from falling into a timid and incidentally much less amusing kind of game. The man who relies entirely on his adversary's misplays to win never realizes the full joy of tennis.

From the question of attack naturally arises the discussion of whether the net game or the back court game is better. I have shown that the net player and the back court player (those who play one game or the other habitually) have been superseded by the man who understands both games and interweaves them to meet the requirements of a given situation. The ground stroke and the volley are equally important and both are necessary.

Nothing is stronger proof that tennis has become more and more a game of brains than the modern all-around game. The net game and the back court game could be used more or less by rote, the player depending on a severe ground stroke in one case and on his ability to volley in the other. To-day you cannot depend on so limited a number of strokes. You should play your strokes with machine like repetition—that is with a definite and highly cultivated style, but

your tactics, on the other hand, should be as surprising and unmechanical as possible. The more you have mastered form, the more surprisingly you can play, the more you can anticipate. Mental alertness, the quick-wittedness to anticipate an opponent's moves, are essential to the best tennis.

A cultivated all-around style plus mental quickness are what the modern player requires. He must be equipped to combat the volleyer and to defend his position when he himself is the volleyer. I am such a firm believer in the necessity of mental quickness with which to meet the constantly surprising situations that come up in tennis, that I have already devoted an entire chapter to it.

The greatest temptation for the beginner to overcome is playing the one or two shots he knows how to make and only increasing his repertory as necessity compels him to. Thereby he falls into a rut and develops a one-sided game, doing the same thing over and over again. When a man is playing in a tournament he protects his weakness; when he is practicing he should leave his weakness wide open in order to gain as much practice as possible in the department of the game where he needs it most.

If he cannot handle lobs he should ask some friend to lob to him over and over again until he can handle them, and the same should be done with every other stroke. The fun of tennis increases in compound ratio as one's skill advances, and the more seriously the beginner plays the game at first, the greater pleasure it will eventually afford him.

While it is perfectly true that the foundation of good tennis is a strong fore and backhand ground stroke, it is well to keep in mind that these are only part of one's stroke equipment and that from the first the aim should be to master a full assortment of strokes to meet all conditions of play. For it is only after mastering a complete repertory of strokes that one feels free to combine the back court and the volleying game as they should be combined.

After all, if the player is not in the right place at the right time it will avail him little to have certain shots at his command. And if he feels that he is weak at volleying the chances are in favor of his staying in the back of the court when all the dictates of common sense are urging him to go forward.

Similarly if he is weak on his ground stroke he will over-rush the net. But if he is trained properly he will move over the court, regard-

less of whether he will have to volley, play off the ground, use his forehand or his backhand—just as a man moves a piece over the chess board—to improve his own position and weaken his opponent's.

Not enough players consider the tennis court in its entirety in such a way that they see the relation of every move to every other move. Ordinarily the striker returns the service as best he can and then if his shot is returned he sends it back as best he can and waits for the next shot. I have already said that I did not believe in the general use of a prearranged plan of campaign, such as that used by Wright against Brookes (a brilliant exception); but there is a difference between playing according to a prearranged plan of battle, and playing each shot as if it had no relation to the subsequent or succeeding shot.

Of course the great trouble with many players is that they play every shot to win the point. And this is pure folly, for it is only now and then that a shot can be so played, and when so played it should not be done merely with the expectation of winning the point, but with the definite knowledge that if played as intended, it will win the point.

Every other shot should contribute toward

opening a hole in the adversary's court through which you can place a winning shot. Even the defensive shot should have this element in it, namely to tend to improve your position. And this is what I mean by saying that every shot should be supported by a definite plan of attack. Each shot and the actions of the other player do of course alter your plan, from play to play, but this fact does not change the principle.

Suppose, for instance, when at the net you volley deep to your adversary's backhand corner. The thought comes to you that on the next shot you can surely volley to the other corner for a pass. The same thought comes to him, and being fleet footed, he dashes across the court in time to protect his forehand corner whereupon you pass him on his backhand. The fact of having played to one corner of the court when you had thought of the other, does not mean that you have played without plan for in speaking of plan I mean something much less definite than such a proceeding, but no less systematic.

In planning an attack you do not reason from one definite shot to another definite shot, but from one shot to all the possible returns from it. You then place yourself so that you

can handle the majority of these returns to your own best advantage. From each of these returns there follows a series of possible shots for you to play and you choose the one you think will help you most.

But all of these shots have a certain point in common. To return to the hypothetical case cited above, your first volley to the opponent's deep backhand corner was for the purpose of forcing him back so that his return would be weak enough for you to handle with such effect that you could take full advantage of an opening. That opening might be on one side of his court or the other and naturally you played where you found it.

Your plan then was to force the opponent out of position to such an extent that he could not return offensively and that you could take advantage of this fact. And that is what I mean by plan. Play every shot to build up an opportunity for you to play the winning shot.

Much as has been said about the importance of thinking to the tennis player, I do not hesitate to refer to this point again for the very reason that it is so important. Who has not noticed the player who, thinking that he had been passed by an unusually lucky shot from his opponent, returns to the back court to start the

next point without giving the matter further consideration. But the process of thinking does not, or rather should not, end with the point. I thought I was in a safe position yet I was passed. Why was I passed?

One should always ask himself just such questions in order that the next time he may be wiser. Was his adversary unusually quick or was he unusually slow? There is a reason for the way every point is played and if a player does not think exactly why he lost or won a point and make proper deductions his improvement in the game will not be great.

In summing up let me add these few points:

Think after shots as well as before them. Remember that the man who plays tennis seriously at the start will have the most fun in the end. Learn to hit the ball correctly, keep your eye on the ball, study position, and use your brain.

THE END